Google

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

**Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

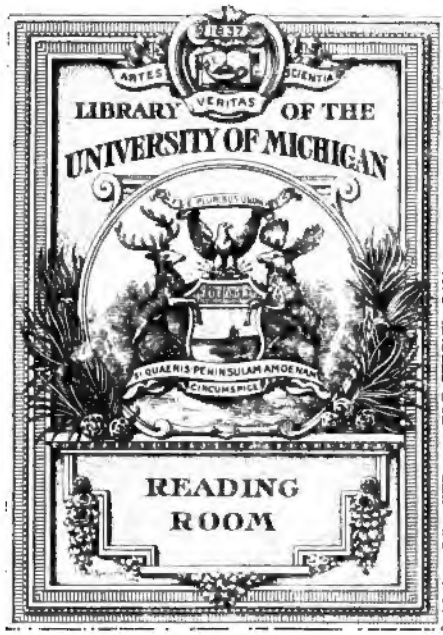
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

**About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

B 1,248,435


1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE
READING
ROOM

# STUDIES IN CHAUCER

3E466

## HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS

BY

THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE SHEFFIELD SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL
OF YALE UNIVERSITY

*IN THREE VOLUMES*

VOL. III.

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
1892

Copyright, 1891, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

*All rights reserved.*

# CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

## CHAPTER VII.

### CHAUCER IN LITERARY HISTORY

#### I.

His position among English poets, 3, 4; vicissitudes in his reputation, 4, 5; difficulty of the investigation, 5–7; continuous popularity of great writers, 7–9; Chaucer no exception, 9, 10; recognition by contemporaries, 10–15; by Gower, Scogan, and the author of the 'Testament of Love,' 10, 11; by Occleve and Lydgate, 11, 12; imitation by Froissart, 13; tribute of Eustache Deschamps, 13–15; early popularity in Scotland, 15–18; imitated by James I., Henryson, Dunbar, and Gawin Douglas, 18–22; popularity in the fifteenth century, 22–33; Occleve and Lydgate and their tributes, 22-27; sterility of the century, 27–30; mentioned constantly with Gower and Lydgate, 30–33; invention of printing followed by numerous editions of Chaucer's works, 33; popularity in the sixteenth century, 33–72; number of editions issued, 33, 34; popularity with the Puritans, 34–41; admiration expressed by writers of the time, 41, 42; by Spenser, 42–46; literary controversies in the sixteenth century as related to Chaucer, 46–65; conflict of the classical and the modern movement, 46–48; the controversy about versification, 48–51; supposed irregularity of Chaucer's versification, 51–54; sixteenth-century pronunciation of Chaucer, 54–58; controversy as to the diction of poetry, 58, 59; revival of Chaucer's words, 59–65; blunders as to his reputation in the Elizabethan age, 65–67; Chaucer and the drama, 67–70; Gower's recognized inferiority, 70–72; Chaucer's reputation touches its lowest point in the seventeenth century, 73; Earle's remark, 74; admiration expressed by Milton, 74–76; Kynaston's Latin translation, 76–82; desirability then felt of translating English works into Latin, 82–84; comments and views of Pepys and Mennis on Chaucer, 84–88; Braithwaite's com-

ment, 88–90; Phillips's comment, 91; edition of 1687, 92; references to Chaucer by Cokayne, Evelyn, and Denham, 93–95; Addison on Chaucer, 95–97.

II.

Anthony Wood on Chaucer, 98; Dryden on, 99–109; supposed rudeness of Chaucer's versification, 110–112; imitations of Chaucer, 112–114; seventeenth-century imitations, 115–119; eighteenth-century imitations, 119–132; practice of modernization, 132–134; assumed obsoleteness of Chaucer's language, 134–140; change in language, 140–151; ignorance of Early English in the eighteenth century, 151–154; modernization of Chaucer, 154–156; eighteenth-century preference for modernizations, 156–159; Dryden's modernizations, 159–179; Pope's, 179–185; Betterton's, 185–188; Ogle's, 189–191; two classes of modernizations, 191, 192; modernizations of Boyse and Brooke, 192–197; of Lipscomb, 197–200; of Dart, Calcott, and Harte, 200, 201; eighteenth-century diction unsuited for modernizing Chaucer, 201, 202; nineteenth-century and eighteenth-century modernizations compared, 202, 203; modernizations of Lord Thurlow, 203–208; of Wordsworth, 208–210; of Leigh Hunt, 210–212; new scheme of modernization, 212–214; the last of the modernizations, 214–229.

III.

The influence of Dryden, 230–233; Gay's comedy, 234; Pope on Chaucer, 234–237; eighteenth-century opinion, 237–239; tendency of modernizations, 240; antiquarian interest in Chaucer, 241; Mrs. Cooper's publication, 242, 243; increasing interest in Chaucer, 243, 244; Warton on Chaucer, 244–253; reason for the failure of the eighteenth century to appreciate Chaucer, 253, 254; influence of Tyrwhitt, 254, 255; views overthrown by Tyrwhitt, 255–258; Chaucer's popularity in the later Georgian period, 258–263; admiration felt by Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, 258, 259; Byron on Chaucer, 260, 261; Miss Mitford on Chaucer, 262, 263; present rapidly increasing popularity of Chaucer, 263, 264; the question of the modernization of Chaucer in orthography and pronunciation, 264–279.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CHAUCER AS A LITERARY ARTIST

The antagonism between authors and reviewers as old as literature, 283; no record of hostile criticism of Chaucer by his

contemporaries, 284; evidence from his writings of its existence, 284–288; his dissatisfaction with his own work, 288, 289; ignorant criticism about Chaucer inherited by the present age, 289, 290; the conventional comparison of Chaucer with Shakspeare, 290–293; continued existence of eighteenth-century views of Chaucer's art, 293; the inspired-barbarian view, 294, 295; Chaucer a conscious worker, 295, 296; in versification, a reformer and an inventor, 296–299; the three kinds of verse he found in common use, 299–301; alliterative verse, 299; ryming verse in stanzas, 299, 300; octosyllabic verse, 301; the invention and introduction of the heroic measure his greatest service, 301–303; his creation of the ryme royal, 304–306; the three measures he principally used, 306, 307; his naturalization of foreign measures and experiments in versification, 307–316; his progressive development in the handling of the matter of his poems, 316–322; absence of verbal quibbles, 319; characteristics of early poets, 322, 323; Chaucer's attitude towards literature a critical one, 323–344; his method not characterized by blind creative impulse, 324; prominence of his own personality, 325; freedom from the bombastic and the commonplace, 326, 327; freedom from prolixity, 327–330; his criticism of the 'Gestes,' 330–332; of the 'Tragedies,' 332–335; the 'Legend of Good Women' as showing changing taste, 335–339; the critical tendency as revealed in the tales of the Franklin, the Wife of Bath, and the Clerk of Oxford, 339–344; the question of morality, 344–364; the controversy as to the province of art, 344, 345; the apology of conformity with the taste of his times, 345–347; Chaucer's view of the relation of art to morality, 347–353; his avoidance of the revolting, 353–356; his treatment of the immoral, 356–358; the humorous tales in literary history, 358–363; their excellence, 363, 364; Chaucer's art injuriously affected by his learning, 364–375; intrusion of irrelevant learning, 365–371; improper digressions, 371, 372; passages improperly introduced, 372–375; the question of art in Chaucer's indifference to the truth of fact, 375–391; his anachronisms, 375–380; conformity to fact not cared for, 380–383; Shakspeare, Milton, Gray, similarly indifferent, 383–387; the value of conformity to fact, 387–391; the question of Chaucer's originality, 391–430; his obligations to other writers, 392–398; mistaken conceptions of originality, 398–406; view of Sandras as to Chaucer's originality, 407–412; of Wright, 413, 414; the invention of tales, 414–416; Chaucer's treatment of his material, 416–419; its originality, 419, 420; his acknowledgment of his obligations, 420–429; his obligations to others

not a question of first importance, 429, 430; incompleteness of his works, 430–439; of the 'Canterbury Tales,' 431–436; of the 'House of Fame,' 436–438; general conclusions, 439–446; changes of method, 439, 440; closeness of his language to that of common life, 440–443; position in English literature, 444; characteristics of his style, 444–446.

## APPENDIX.

Discovery of a new poem of Chaucer's, 449, 450; discovery of the originals of the 'Complaint of Venus,' 450, 451; correction of errors in the text, 451, 452; maxim derived from Seneca, 452; identification of Retters with the modern Réthel, 452, 453.

INDEX ..... 455

# VII.

## CHAUCER IN LITERARY HISTORY

# CHAUCER IN LITERARY HISTORY

## I.

IN 1628, twelve years after the death of Shakspeare, appeared the first edition of the 'Microcosmography' of John Earle, then fellow of Merton College, Oxford, afterwards successively the Bishop of Worcester and of Salisbury. This work belonged to a class of writings —the delineation of individual characters—which the intensely introspective life of the earlier half of the seventeenth century had made extremely popular. Among the number sketched was that of a Vulgar-Spirited Man. By this was meant one who merely followed in all things the common cry, who had no opinions but the received opinions of the majority about him. In the description of the character occurs a passage which is of some importance to us, as marking the position then supposed to be held in popular estimation by the first great writer of our literature. The vulgar-spirited man is described, among other things, as one "that cries Chaucer for his money above all our English poets, because the voice has gone so, and he has read none." We shall have occasion to see in the course of this chapter that these words represent a literary tradition rather than a real sentiment. Yet considered merely as a survival, they have a peculiar interest. For at the time they were

written a succession of authors had come and gone who had made the Elizabethan age the proudest in our literary annals. The intellectual outburst of that period, it is true, had long before reached its point of highest flow. It was then running in narrow channels or losing itself entirely among shallows. But if the power of production was beginning to fail, self-respect still survived unimpaired. A certain degree of distance, indeed, is usually needed to gain a proper conception of the magnitude of large objects; and Shakspeare was as yet too near the time to have the fulness and extent of his superiority generally appreciated. But it is certainly creditable to the honesty and healthy spirit of the age that the poet of English literature, strictly so called, who was first in point of time, was still reckoned by the voice of common tradition the first in point of greatness. With an exception in favor of one man only, that verdict has never been set aside. No higher tribute can be paid to the freshness and power of Chaucer's genius than to say that it has never failed in any period to triumph over the obsoleteness of his diction and the capriciousness of popular taste. More than that, though nearly five centuries have gone by since his death, in the long and illustrious roll of English poets the opinions of all competent to judge place only the name of Shakspeare above his own.

At the same time, it need not be denied that to many, even of professedly literary men, Chaucer is still a name rather than a power. If this be true now, when the means for becoming familiar with his works have vastly increased, it was necessarily much truer of periods when

acquaintance with his writings was looked upon as an achievement that equalled in difficulty the mastery of a foreign tongue, but was attended with neither the advantage nor the repute which a knowledge of the latter would have conferred. In the history of the fame of every great author we are certain to find vicissitudes of exaltation and depression. This, which is the lot of all, would in any case have been the lot of Chaucer. But to the common fate he was subject in a peculiar degree. His reputation was affected by the revolution of language even more than by that of literary taste. Its history, accordingly, is marked by variations on a grand scale. He early attained and long held a height of celebrity which is reached by few. The period of admiration almost extravagant was followed by a period of comparative neglect, during which little was known of him outside of a comparatively small class. This, in turn, has been followed by a revival of interest which, though far from having come to its full vigor, has once more already brought him prominently to the front. He is no longer in the first rank of English poets merely in name. His influence is a reality to many. It is steadily reaching wider circles, and gives abundant signs that it is only in the first flush of a renewed course of literary conquest.

To trace the history of Chaucer's reputation is the object of the present chapter. It is an investigation that from its very nature is one of peculiar difficulty. The peril both of over-estimate and of under-estimate is always present. Even with the ample facilities of our own day, it is no easy matter to gauge the comparative

popularity of writers, or ascertain their rank in public opinion. At the very outset we have to throw out a large share of the judgment that is noisiest in its utterance. That general public which reads contemporary works of more or less merit shades off insensibly into a vastly larger public which reads contemporary works of no merit whatever. The abundant testimony furnished by the men of this intellectual grade may keep the authors of the present before us. It has little to do, however, with establishing their relative position. Yet the opinion of this mighty mass does carry a certain weight, not from the actual value of the utterance, but from its volume. We despise the judgment of the market-place, and experience shows that we are usually right in despising it. Unfortunately, it also shows that we are sometimes wrong. The voice of all men turns out occasionally, even in literary matters, to be more worthy of respect than the voice of the chosen few. He alone can be absolutely secure of immortality who has gained the suffrages of both.

The difficulty of arriving at correct conclusions in regard to the authors of the past, especially of the remote past, is of a different nature. In their case it is the scantiness of the record that troubles us, and not its fulness. From their own times very few estimates of any kind are handed down. Oftentimes there are scarcely any. We are consequently in perpetual danger of drawing erroneous inferences from those that chance to be preserved. They are always liable to represent individual tastes rather than the general judgment. There is even greater danger of being misled, not by the character

of the estimates, but by their rarity. We are insensibly influenced to believe, because a thing does not happen to be mentioned, that therefore it does not exist; because an author is not named, that therefore he is not read.

In the case of Chaucer this has led to some most unfounded inferences and erroneous assertions. Exaggerated accounts are often given of the neglect which at particular periods has overtaken his writings. It is implied that there were times when he was absolutely forgotten. For myself, I confess to feeling little faith in the great poems that continue to be unread and the great poets that continue to be unknown. It is one of the blessings, or curses, that the invention of printing has brought in its train, that every age witnesses the temporary revival of some work or author that the world has not taken the pains to remember. With it is preached the comfortable doctrine, dear to unsuccessful mediocrity, that the only men who are worth anything are the men who fail. Undoubtedly a man of genius, under the stress of peculiar circumstances, may be deprived, for a period at least, of the honor to which he is justly entitled. Still, the instances are far fewer than is usually supposed. The belief is largely due to the disposition to impute our own personal ignorance to the whole of mankind. It is a common mistake to fancy that the writers we ourselves do not hear spoken of, or the works we do not regard, are not spoken of and are not regarded at all. We are naturally inclined to estimate the popularity of an author by his popularity in the immediate circle to which we belong, or of the still larger but never-

theless limited circle the views of which come to our ears. He is supposed to rise or fall in the estimate of all men according to the estimate of the few we know, or know about. As a result of fallacious inferences, based upon lack of information or upon misinformation, the announcement is not unfrequently made that this or that author is no longer read. There have been plenty of proclamations of this sort in the history of English literature, and there are likely to be plenty more. Statements of such a nature are usually made with the pompous assurance that specially characterizes the men who are unable to realize the largeness of the world, and how very insignificant a part of it is the fraction of the fraction to which they belong; who fancy, moreover, in the changing tastes of the hour, or in the sentiments of some special clique, the final word of criticism has been spoken and the final conclusion of the ages has been reached and recorded.

As a matter of fact, there is never a time when a really great author is unknown or neglected. He is in fashion somewhere. He is to some an inspiration and a guide, though to the little coterie of which we form a part he may seem forgotten, and by it may perhaps be ignorantly despised. A reputation that has been established by the suffrage of centuries will never be permanently affected by the hostility of any person or clique; though the multitude may, for a time, mistake the failure to protest against condemnation as an assent to its justice. It is the advocates of the writer whose position is not assured that are disposed to be loudest in proclamations of his superiority. The men who really believe in

the greatness of the god they worship do not persistently go about asserting his pre-eminence. They assume it as a matter about which there can be no controversy. Any other course would suggest a suspicion of the fulness of their own faith, if it did not actually imply secret distrust. It is so with the lovers of a great poet, at least of a great poet of the past. They are not in the habit of thrusting their admiration of him upon a heedless world. Nor do they often take the pains to put upon record the opinions they entertain. They are content with simply holding them and with quietly despising the idols that have been set up by the latest devotees of the newest literary divinities.

Chaucer is no exception to the rule. Against his continuous popularity no time has ever been able to prevail. This is perfectly consonant with the view that the circle of those who knew about him was at one period constantly narrowing, and the band of those who studied him was constantly diminishing. Still, the three tests of enduring fame—the opinion of contemporaries, the opinion of foreign nations, the opinion of posterity—he has successfully met. The first of these it was essential for him to have, living in the age he did. The mere fact of his reputation continuing to last at all proves that he had it. For whatever truth there may be now in Wordsworth's dictum, that every great original writer must create his own audience, it could have been true only to a very limited extent in the age of manuscript. If an author did not please his immediate contemporaries, he stood little chance of pleasing posterity, because he stood little chance of reaching it.

Appreciation of him in his own time was almost necessary to his being known to after-time. In order to justify the trouble and expense of copying, his work would have to be made interesting to the people who were then alive; for the transcribers could not reasonably be expected to anticipate the feelings of people who were some day going to be alive.

Chaucer easily fulfils this first condition. The appreciation of his contemporaries is something that he received on even a grand scale. When we take into account the scantiness of the literary records of former ages, the tributes to his greatness that have come down from his own day are extraordinary, both for their number and their character. The recognition of his position as a poet is so general and so hearty that it furnishes conclusive proof of the profound impression he made upon the men of his own time. It was remarkable for the unanimity with which the highest rank was accorded him without question. The well-known lines of Gower in which testimony is borne to the universality of his reputation and to the popularity of his writings have already been quoted.[1] Two or three passages, in addition, in this same author's work are clear evidences of the favor in which the poem of 'Troilus and Cressida' was held.[2] This, at the time of the composition of the 'Confessio Amantis,' must have been Chaucer's principal production. Scogan, likewise, in the poem he addressed to the lords and gentlemen of the king's house, speaks of him in more than one place as his master. He calls him the noble poet of Britain.

[1] Vol. i., p. 44. [2] E. g., *Confessio Amantis*, vol. ii., pp. 95, 388.

He copies in full one of his shorter pieces, as if whatever was said by him were the final authority upon any disputed point. The unknown contemporary author of the prose 'Testament of Love' is equally earnest in his praises. Chaucer, in his eyes, is the noble English philosophical poet. He surpasses all other writers in matter and in manner, and to him worship and reverence are due from all.

But it is at the hands of the two men who were contemporaries and survivors that he receives the most frequent testimonials of praise. These are Occleve and Lydgate. By both of them the superiority of Chaucer to all who had written in the English tongue is recognized as an indisputable fact. Occleve went farther. The isle of Britain could never bring forth the equal of him whom he styled "the first finder[1] of our fair language." Ardent as are Occleve's testimonials to his greatness, they are exceeded by those of Lydgate in number, though they could not well be in fervency. There is scarcely a production of the latter, of any length, that does not contain references to the poet or to his writings. Some of these passages can be found in all extended accounts of Chaucer's life. There are many more that have never been noticed. Lydgate is, in fact, never weary of applying to Chaucer the title of chief poet of Britain. In his 'Flower of Courtesy' he laments his death. Those who come after may strive to imitate his style, but as he declares, perhaps from personal experience, "it will not be." That fountain is henceforth dry. It is, however, in his translation of

[1] Poet.

Boccaccio's 'Fall of Princes' that perhaps the most frequent references abound. This version was made several years after Chaucer's death, for Lydgate tells us himself that he turned the work into English at the desire of the Duke of Gloucester, uncle to Henry VI. His patron he praises highly for his love of literature and hatred of heretics, none of whom dared come in his sight or abide in the land. As it was not until the death of his brother, in 1423, that this nobleman became protector of the realm, the reference is proof of the steady hold which Chaucer continued to maintain over the contemporary men of letters who survived him. The passage in this translation which gives a list of the poet's writings is a very familiar one to students;[1] but it is only one of many. In several instances he did not render the original, because the incidents recorded had been already treated by Chaucer. The reason he gives for the omission is noteworthy. Not only would he himself feel that it was presumption, but by men generally he would be looked upon as having exhibited it. Anything he could do, he tells us, would be dimmed by the greater brilliancy of his predecessor, just as a star loses its light in the presence of the sun. It were but vain to write anew things said by him before. For this express reason he refuses to relate, among other things, the stories of Lucrece, of Antony and Cleopatra, and of Zenobia. These omissions mean more than at first sight they seem. The admiration which could hold Lydgate's verbosity in check must have transcended the ordinary experience of mankind.

[1] See vol. i., p. 419 ff.

Even in his own time Chaucer's reputation had, in some measure, extended to foreign lands. This was not then to be expected to any marked degree. English literature, in a high sense of the word, was still only in its beginnings, and it is not in the beginnings of literature that reputation passes the bounds set up by speech. This is true even now, when men are constantly engaged in the search for literary novelties in every quarter. But it was infinitely more true of the fourteenth century. We need not therefore be surprised to find only one tribute of this sort expressly paid to Chaucer from authors who wrote in a foreign tongue. There seems, indeed, to be little doubt that from another of them he received the compliment of imitation on a small scale, and of occasional borrowing that showed at least familiarity with one portion of his productions. The opening of the 'Death of Blanche' corresponds precisely with the opening of the poem of Froissart entitled *Le Paradis d'Amour*. One of them must have been taken from the other. A question of priority between two pieces, both of which are undated, is not easy to settle. Still, the English poem was pretty certainly written about 1369, and the probabilities are in favor of the French one having been composed as late as 1384. This is the opinion of Sandras, who was the first to point out the resemblance of the two;[1] and Sandras was not a critic who was disposed to find in Chaucer any originality where it could be avoided.

But the tribute already mentioned as having been directly paid to the poet by a foreign writer is one of

[1] *Étude sur Chaucer*, par Sandras, p. 90.

much greater importance. It came from the pen of Eustache Deschamps. That poet was not a man who loved Englishmen as Englishmen. As a Frenchman he had no reason to do so; for they had done little but make his own land miserable. His works, indeed, are full of the bitterest attacks upon the island wolves who had for years been ravaging his country. National prejudice did not, however, prevent him from recognizing the greatness of a writer that belonged to the hated race. To Chaucer he sent, with a copy of his own works, a ballade addressed to him personally.[1] In the course of it he makes a direct reference to the version of the *Roman de la Rose*, and it is perhaps worthy of note that the refrain is the line,

"Grand translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier."

The piece is written throughout in a highly eulogistic strain, and the stanza with which it begins likens the English poet to several of the great men of the past. The opening lines, translated, read as follows:

"O Socrates full of philosophy,
Seneca in morals and English in conduct of life,
Great Ovid in thy poetry,
Concise in speaking, skilful in writing,
High-soaring eagle, who by thy science
Dost illuminate the realm of Æneas,
The isle of giants, those whom Brutus slew."

We need not take too seriously the language of friendship or compliment. We are not required to believe that Deschamps actually esteemed his contemporary was Socrates, Seneca, and Ovid, rolled in one. It is

[1] *Œuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, vol. ii., p. 138.

probable that the poet's earlier work was all with which the French writer was acquainted. He seems to know Chaucer only or principally as a translator. Still, there is a heartiness in his language which manifests plainly that he recognized the existence of the greatness which it was perhaps impossible for him to have fully appreciated.

Scotland may also be looked upon with propriety as being at this time a foreign country. Still, in spite of the difference of dialect, the language of Central England was comprehensible with slight difficulty, and its literature was fairly accessible. The Northern authors, accordingly, stand to those south of the Tweed in the double light of representatives of the same speech and of different nationalities. There are, indeed, no references of theirs to Chaucer that can be considered as belonging strictly to his own age. There were hardly any writers to make them. Yet the wide popularity of the poet in Scotland during the whole century that followed his death is evidence that it must have begun early to have spread so extensively among a people sufficiently foreign to have its immediate judgment represent something of the attitude of posterity. A feeling, perhaps pardonable upon the score of patriotism, has occasionally induced Scotch critics in later times to speak of Barbour as a rival of his great English contemporary. This has been too preposterous a claim to find any to make it boldly, or many to make it at all. It is upon an author of later date, but of greater genius, that this peculiar method of manifesting devotion to one's country has concentrated itself. Dunbar is the

one who has been elevated to the position which Barbour was manifestly incompetent to hold. Pinkerton assures us that as he had a genius at least equal to Chaucer's, and possessed, in addition, greater originality, it is no wonder that he excelled the English poet in every respect. It is just to say that this is a point of critical heroism higher than the audacity of most even of those Scotch writers who cultivate patriotism at the expense of reason has been able to attain. It is assuredly much farther than the courage of those has been willing to go who cared at all for the estimation in which their own literary sanity was held. These are content with putting Dunbar upon a level with Chaucer in some respects. There are certain things, they tell us, in which he rivals his master. In views of this sort they have occasionally received help from English writers whose words have been treated as of exceptional importance, apparently as if, besides being the opinions of critics, they were also concessions wrung from an enemy.[1]

The feeling which put the authors just mentioned upon any equality with Chaucer, so far as it exists at all, is confined to modern Scotchmen. The earlier ones were absolutely devoid of it. The question of nationality seems not to have entered into the critical estimates they made of poetry. Those of them who have, or who take, any occasion to speak of Chaucer acknowledge unhesitatingly his pre-eminence. By Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndesay he is mentioned, and oftentimes with a fervency of admiration that contrasts in a marked degree with the somewhat tame trib-

[1] For example, Drake in his *Mornings in Spring*, vol. ii., p. 15.

utes that are paid to other writers. It is worthy of observation, too, that the higher the grade of ability, the greater was the admiration exhibited. By Gawin Douglas he is styled the poet without peer, the heavenly trumpet, the horologe and rule to which all must conform.[1] Dunbar himself, whom modern provincialism has sometimes given a seat beside his predecessor, is much the most ardent of all in the enthusiasm he manifests. There is extravagance in the praise given in the following verse from the 'Golden Targe,' but there is no doubt that in this case it expressed a genuine feeling:

"O reverend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all,
As in oure tong ane flour imperiall,
That raise in Britane evir, quho redis rycht,
Thou beris of makaris the tryumph riall;
Thy fresch anamalit termes celicall
This matir coud illumynit have full brycht:
Was thou noucht of oure Inglisch all the lycht,
Surmounting eviry tong terrestriall,
Alls fer as Mayes morow dois mydnycht."

He who could say that Chaucer was a poet whose utterance surpassed that of earthly tongues anywhere and everywhere cannot be accused of lack of enthusiasm, whatever fault may be found with his lack of judgment.

Still, the mere mention of Chaucer's name with commendation is not often very convincing in itself. It might prove familiarity and regard, and again it might not. It was the general practice of the time, and it required then as profound obscurity to escape from the praise of the poet as it does now from the pen of the

[1] In the prologue to his translation of the first book of Virgil's *Æneid*.

biographer. Highly laudatory epithets were showered at that period upon writers who in our days are reckoned little worthy of laudatory epithets of a low kind. There are more satisfactory tests of eminence than the mere trumpeting of a name, which custom would have exacted even if appreciation did not exist. It is the form of admiration which consists in imitation that shows how widespread and profound was the influence that Chaucer exerted. The extent to which his ideas, his methods, and his words have penetrated the productions of those that followed proves how supremely he had come to be the ruling force in our literature. This is particularly noticeable in the Scotch writers of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth. Whole poems of theirs owe their existence, or at least the form they assumed, to similar productions of his creation. In other instances long passages have been suggested by similar passages in the writings of him whom all recognized as their common master. The characters he had rendered famous were constantly introduced. The events he has narrated are made the subject of frequent reference, and of reference in such a way as to imply that they were events well known to all. Entire lines are often adopted with scarcely any change. A sincerer flattery, indeed, than that of words can be found at times in the words themselves. So profoundly did Chaucer affect the Scotch poets that the peculiar grammatical forms of the Midland dialect in which he wrote were occasionally introduced by them into the Northern dialect in which they wrote. This is especially characteristic of the productions of James I. and of

Gawin Douglas. The poetic language employed by them was to some extent, accordingly, a language which was never actually used in the speech of living men. This is not in itself a matter of much consequence. We need not find fault with it, so long as those did not who flourished at the same time. Its interest to us lies in the fact that the devotion to Chaucer was so deep-seated that the reproduction of his characteristics extended not merely to his manner and his mannerisms and to the repetition of his words, but even to the very form his words assumed.

It was with James I. that this imitation began, so far as any memorials have been handed down. His education in England had necessarily brought him under the influence of its reviving literature. In his 'King's Quair,' which was written in 1423, he recommends his work to his "masters dear, Gower and Chaucer." But it is the influence of the latter only that can be seen. That influence, however, can be seen everywhere. The poem is fairly saturated with the spirit of his writings, while there is nothing in it that would prove beyond question that its author had ever read a sentence that Gower wrote. Nor is it merely the spirit that is represented. Phrases, and even lines, in the 'King's Quair' are taken directly from Chaucer, and long passages in it owe to him their inspiration, and, it might be almost fair to add, their existence. The Scottish monarch's imitations, in truth, are more frequent and more noticeable than those of any other poet of the fifteenth century whose writings have fallen under my observation.

The practice begun by James I. was steadily kept up.

Henryson produced the 'Testament of Cressida' as a continuation of 'Troilus and Cressida.' For a long time this piece maintained its place, as has been seen, in the collected edition of the English poet's works, as if it were a composition of his own.[1] Dunbar's writings display the same characteristics as those of King James. Chaucer's influence can be traced in all his longer poems. His phrases occur often, and sometimes a whole line is taken almost bodily.[2] 'The Tua Maryit Wemen and the Wedo,' though written in alliterative verse, is plainly modelled, so far as its matter and spirit are concerned, upon the prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale. To that production Bishop Percy considered it nothing inferior. It is fair to place before others such an estimate of this piece by a writer whose critical opinion is entitled to respect, though it seems to me to display in this instance neither knowledge nor insight. These two poems are alike in that there is outspokenness and coarseness in both. But the broad downright satire of the imitation, though vigorous and pungent, lacks utterly the occasional delicate humor of the original, its ironical insinuation which implies so much more than it says, and, above all, the lightness of touch, passing without effort from gayety to melancholy, that contrasts conspicuously and yet blends inextricably with the boisterous jollity which to the hasty reader is the predominating tone of the prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale. Criticism of a very

[1] See vol. i., pp. 458 ff.

[2] For example,

"Dyane the goddesse chaste of woddis grene." *The Golden Targe*, l. 76.

"O chaste goddesse of the woodes grene." *Knight's Tale*, l. 1439.

Compare also the seventeenth stanza of the first canto of Gawin Douglas's *King Hart* with line 108 and lines 117–119 of the *Knight's tale*.

similar nature can be made of 'The Freiris of Berwik,' an anonymous poem which has been frequently attributed to Dunbar. It is a manifest imitation of Chaucer's humorous stories. Like its originals, it is a tale of intrigue. What it wants is the one thing by which the English poet's broadest pieces are supremely characterized, and that is the air of literary distinction.

Perhaps the one author by whom the sort of admiration which consists in imitation was expressed most fully was Bishop Douglas. In his 'Palace of Honor' the extent to which he followed the prologue to the 'Legend of Good Women' would almost subject him in modern times to the charge of plagiarism. The conduct of his piece is largely patterned upon this particular work. He is in it accused of disloyalty to the queen of love, as Chaucer was to the god. He is defended by the muse Calliope, as Chaucer was by Alcestis. There is the same kind of disquisition upon the duty of the one higher in station to be merciful and not cruel. His trespass was forgiven in the same way as was Chaucer's. He is to write something in praise of Venus as the English poet was to write something in praise of women who had suffered for their faithfulness in love. These resemblances are sufficient to show Douglas's familiarity with one, at least, of the works of his predecessor. But the deference with which he regards him exhibits itself most signally in the remarks he ventures to make in the most approved style of obtuse criticism in the prologue to his translation of the first book of the Æneid. He represents Chaucer as having said in his 'Legend of Good Women' that he would follow Virgil word by word in his account

of Dido. This he had not done, and thereby the prince of poets had been greatly grieved. For his conduct in this matter Douglas took Chaucer to task for presumption. But he did it with bated breath, and with the evident consciousness that he was exhibiting, and would be looked upon as exhibiting, great presumption himself. He was certainly exhibiting gross misapprehension, for Chaucer said nothing of the sort with which he was charged. The criticism has on that very account an interest of its own, for it shows that the custom of imputing to the author as an error the results of the censor's own muddleheadedness of comprehension has for itself the sanction of venerable antiquity. But its marked characteristic is the anxiety that Douglas manifests to convince his readers that he does not utter his censure "for offence," and the care he takes to assure them that he regarded himself as altogether inferior to the poet with whom he ventures in this instance to find fault. It is clear from his words that Chaucer had in Scotland a body of adherents with whom no author felt it desirable to come into collision. The deferential tone he exhibits towards him, even in censuring him, is made the more striking by its contrast with the vigorous way in which he speaks of Caxton. Him he abuses without stint for the variations from Virgil found in his 'Troy Book.' The language actually breaks down under his inability to express satisfactorily and sufficiently the indignation and disgust he feels.

When we come to the English writers of the fifteenth century we find this same pre-eminence of Chaucer as unanimously and ungrudgingly accorded. His immedi-

ate successors, who were at the same time his contemporaries, are Occleve and Lydgate. The words of these two, in speaking of him, are particularly deserving of attention because they are the words of men to whom he was known personally as well as by his writings. We get from them more than a mere critical view of the estimation in which his works were held. They give the impression that as a man he inspired not only admiration, but a feeling of personal devotion on the part of those with whom he came in close contact. It is evident, indeed, from Lydgate's words in his 'Troy Book,' that he was particularly kind and considerate towards young poets;[1] a fact, however, which, if we judge from the pieces of the period that have survived, furnishes matter for regret rather than for rejoicing. To me the notices of Chaucer are the only parts of the writings of both these authors that deserve much attention. If this opinion be thought unjust, it is just to say that it does no more than extend to the two a critical estimate which is taken by most persons of the one.

Occleve is a writer who has been contemptuously treated even by those who speak respectfully of Lydgate. Many of his works have not been printed. Of those which have been, it must be confessed that they are generally works which it requires dogged resolution to read. Even this is not likely to hold out, unless

[1] "For he that was ground of well saying,
In all his life, hindered no making,
My master Chaucer, that found full many spot,
Him list not pinch nor grucche at every blot;
Nor meve himself to perturbe his rest,
I have heard told, but said alway the best;
Suffering goodly of his gentleness
Full many thing embraced with rudeness."

some other end in view exists than familiarity with his writings for their own sake. Still, Occleve has a certain claim upon our respect which has never been adequately acknowledged. His reputation has suffered from his candor. He had sense enough and taste enough to see the immense distance between himself and Chaucer, and to appreciate the excellence of the master. But he lacked the wisdom to keep his knowledge to himself. In a passage which is one of several that show the kindness which the great poet displayed towards his inferiors, Occleve honestly admitted his own incapacity to profit by the instruction he received. As he says,

> " My dearè master, God his soulè quite,
> And father Chaucer fain would me have taught,
> But I was dull and learnede right naught."

The world, which is very apt to rate a man at his own valuation, took Occleve at his word. In so doing it treated him with justice in one way, and with injustice in another. It is common enough to be dull. What is uncommon is the ability to perceive it in one's self, and the willingness to admit it. There is no doubt that he showed good sense in thinking meanly of his own performances. Most of his poems that have been printed are anything but poetical. The ' Letter of Cupid,' found in the folio editions of Chaucer, is tedious beyond description. Six of his better poems were published by George Mason in 1796. Among these are one or two that have a distinct intellectual quality of their own. There are in them not only occasional gleams of wit, but a mastery of melody is also displayed which was

uncommon in that age, and which is not visible in most of Occleve's other work, at least of that printed. Both of these things are true of 'The Misrule,' the first poem in the collection. Those who think this praise too high may take in preference Ritson's criticism, made in 1802, in the course of his description of the manuscript in which these pieces are found. "Six of peculiar stupidity," he remarked, "were selected and published by its late owner."[1] Could we be certain that the orison to the Virgin which begins with the words "Mother of God and Virgin undefouled" were a composition of Occleve's, and not a copy by him of one of his master's, we should be justified in according him a higher poetical ability than could be conceded him for all his other published productions put together. Its superiority, indeed, to the rest of his work is so marked that it is difficult for that very reason to regard it as his; and while it could not be looked upon as one of Chaucer's most successful achievements, it is not unworthy of his powers.

In the frank admission that he was dull lay Occleve's moral superiority to his better-known contemporary, and perhaps his superiority in intellectual discernment. Lydgate was dull, and he probably never knew it. He certainly never told of it, if he did know it. The wise reticence he displayed in refraining to commit himself upon the point to his own disadvantage has been rewarded a hundred-fold. He was long accepted, and is even now occasionally accepted, at a valuation which was put upon him at a period when there was not a sufficient quantity of literature in the language to make

[1] Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, p. 63.

men very discriminating about its quality. I am aware that he was spoken of respectfully by a man of genius such as was Gray, and was not disrespectfully spoken of by a woman of genius such as was Mrs. Browning. It only proves that, in spite of the dictum of Horace, there are middling verses which the immortals do not despise. Gray, moreover, somewhat like Warton, his successor in these literary investigations, was, to a certain extent, an explorer. Both of them, accordingly, in their comments upon early authors, adopted unconsciously the explorer's habit of exaggeration, just as the first voyagers to the New World brought back marvellous stories of fountains of perpetual youth, and El Dorados abounding in gold and silver and precious stones. This will explain, to some extent, the comparatively high estimate they expressed of the productions of Lydgate. It is not necessary to go to the length of the fierce antiquary Ritson, who, in his usual amiable way, styles him in one place "a most prolix and voluminous poetaster," and in another "a voluminous, prosaic, and drivelling monk," in the comments he made upon the "elaborate drawlings," as he terms them, of this writer.[1] After giving the titles of some two hundred and fifty pieces and works attributed to Lydgate, he added, genially, that "these stupid and fatiguing productions, which by no means deserve the name of poetry, and their still more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer, are neither worth collecting * * * nor even worthy of preservation.[2] Even those who might dis-

[1] Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica*, pp. 66 and 87. [2] *Ib.*, p. 88.

pute Ritson's views on other points, will not deny that Lydgate was voluminous. There was apparently no topic upon which he was not ready to express himself at a moment's notice. He produced, in consequence, a good deal of matter which it presumably gratified him to write; though it seems inconceivable that there was ever a state of the human intellect in which gratification could have come to any one from its perusal. In his versification there is no harmony, no regular movement. In his expression, he had gained facility at the expense of felicity. He is one of those noted, or rather notorious, authors whose fame, such as it is, rests not upon their own achievements, but upon the kindness with which others have been induced to look upon their achievements. There is, accordingly, no necessity of reading his works resting upon any one save him who has to make a professional study of English literature. For this unfortunate being the dead past, so far from being able to bury its dead, is not even able to bury its bores.

To so much of mention these writers are entitled, because their names appear frequently associated with that of their great master. But no account of Chaucer could possibly be considered complete that did not quote, or at least refer, to the remark that he resembled a sunny day in an English spring; after the visionary prospect of a speedy summer has gone the gloom of winter returns, and the buds and blossoms called forth by temporary warmth are nipped by frosts or torn by tempests. The mediocrity of Occleve and Lydgate naturally brings us to the proper place for putting this observa-

tion upon record. It was first made by Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry.' It has been faithfully repeated by every one since who has had anything to say of the relation of the poet to our literature. In deference to a habit so thoroughly established, I likewise reproduce the comparison; for at this late day it would be ungracious to sever what time and custom have so long joined together. A similar statement would doubtless hold true of several other poets in several other lands. It is not unreasonable to believe that a remark of the same general nature may have fallen from the lips of the Athenian of the age of Pericles as he contemplated the long interval of time that elapsed between the death of Homer and the appearance of any one who, with any propriety, could be said to have inherited anything of his genius. Still, the observation is just in the case of our own great early poet, even if it also can be held to record the general experience of the race. Chaucer, it is certain, left no inheritors of his power or of his literary position. That his genius should have died with him is not so strange; but even the secret of his metrical skill seems to have been lost by his immediate successors. The followers of Pope equalled Pope in harmony, though they never anywhere approached his incisive utterance or his brilliant wit. But with Chaucer died, for a time, not only the beauty of poetry, but the beauty of versification. Not to the mastery of that almost purely mechanical process did the men of his school attain. The lines of Lydgate and Occleve are frequently rugged. They are rugged, too, in a way for which the scribe, the scape-goat

of the ancient author's sins, cannot be held responsible. The fifteenth century seems to have been stricken with sterility in every quarter that indicates literary ability of any sort. Certainly this is true of the writers whose names it has left us; for it is a singular fact that the anonymous productions of that age exceed those of the authors of repute in everything which makes poetry readable, not to say endurable. The composers of 'The Flower and the Leaf' and of 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,' whoever they were, have left us in those productions something that far surpasses anything that came from the pen of Occleve, Lydgate, or any of the sixty other authors whose names have been collected and whose writings have been registered by the indefatigable Ritson. Whatever poetic power existed in the fifteenth century, it made no effort to hand down the name of its possessor. Even at its very close, the anonymous ballad of the 'Nut-Brown Maid' remains unrivalled by any contemporary work which can point with certainty to its parentage.

It may be contended, therefore, that the supremacy of Chaucer during the fifteenth century was a supremacy won without difficulty and maintained without competition; that this, at least, was true so far as the English poets whose names have been preserved come under consideration. Most of these have to us hardly even the unsubstantial nature of shadows. What they wrote, so far from representing what any one has read, does not generally represent anything of which any one has heard. It must assuredly be conceded that there is no one of this time with whom his reputation has to

dread rivalry, even remotely. He left in England no school of poets who had the ability to carry on the work he had begun. It was inevitable that his excellence should dwarf the feeble efforts of his imitators; but these would have seemed feeble even had nothing of his survived to furnish a standard of comparison. The result of this literary degeneracy was that for a long period he was regarded not merely as the chief poet of Britain, but as the only one. The fact of his undisputed pre-eminence cannot be gainsaid. It was as apparent to the men of that time as it is now to us. The sentiment generally entertained was expressed by Caxton at the close of his edition of the 'House of Fame,' which he printed about 1483. "In all his works," he wrote, "he excelleth, in mine opinion, all other writers in our English. For he writeth no void words: but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praising for his noble making and writing. For of him all other have borrowed sith, and taken in all their well-saying and writing."

To the statement just made it may be that some students of our literature may be led to take exception. Against the universal recognition of Chaucer's supremacy one circumstance will seem to militate. There is one particular ingredient in the judgment passed upon the early poet during a large part of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that sensibly allays the satisfaction with which the historian of literature may regard the tributes paid to his genius. This is the fact that he is very constantly associated with Gower and Lydgate.

Sometimes it is with no perceptible difference in the commendation. If this does not detract from the sincerity of the admiration, it does from the competence of the taste that feels it and of the judgment that expresses it. Still, it is easy to attach an undue importance to this conjunction of names. It resulted from the accident of circumstance rather than from any disposition to regard the three as being on the same literary level. They lived at about the same period. They were the only writers of their time whose works were read at all. It was therefore natural that they should be mentioned together. So to do became, indeed, a sort of literary habit. It ordinarily meant no more than much of the notice which Chaucer himself received two centuries later. It was a matter of courtesy to make the usual polite remarks about Gower and Lydgate whenever there was any occasion for referring to the early writers with whom their successors dated the beginning of English literature. To mention them came soon to be in conformity with all well-established precedents. To mention them respectfully brought to the speaker the gratifying consciousness that he had said both what he ought to say and what he was expected to say.

While this is assuredly the true explanation of most of the references to the two poets, it need not be denied that there were instances where the praise bestowed upon Gower and Lydgate was as hearty and sincere as that given to Chaucer. Of this fact we have a notable illustration in the early part of the sixteenth century. There was one man to whom Chaucer's disciple was

more of an inspiration than Chaucer himself. This was Stephen Hawes. In his 'Pastime of Pleasure,' first printed in 1509, he notices with praise several of the great poet's works.[1] These are the 'Canterbury Tales,' the 'House of Fame,' the 'Legend of Good Women,' and 'Troilus and Cressida.' He also pays the customary tribute to Gower. But it is for Lydgate that he reserves his greatest enthusiasm and his choicest epithets.[2] Again and again he affectionately terms him his master. Upon his greatness his mind dwells fondly. He is described as "the most dulcet spring of famous rhetoric."[3] He is, Hawes is particular to tell us, "the chief original of my learning."[4] The admiration of a dull man by one still duller is not a circumstance to excite surprise or even remark. The only objectionable feature connected with it in this case, if there be any, is that Chaucer should have also a share in the appreciation which this author was capable of feeling. For his praise was not of a kind to make the recipient proud. To the general reader Hawes and his works are unknown; known he is, in fact, only to the antiquary. It must be admitted that the general reader has the best of it. The 'Pastime of Pleasure,' of which mention has just been made, has certainly one of the most misleading titles to be found in English literature. The trivial and the careless, least of all, need delude themselves with the fancy that it was for them the work was designed. It provides just the sort of pastime and furnishes just the degree of pleasure that might be expected from one

[1] See pp. 53, 71, 137, etc., of Percy Society edition.

[2] Ib., pp. 46, 54, 56, 220.

[3] Ib., p. 55.

[4] Ib., p. 55.

who looked upon Lydgate as his master and took him for his model.

With the introduction of printing into England, we are at once upon firmer ground for testing Chaucer's popularity. The evidence now to be given is of the most unimpeachable character. Two editions of the 'Canterbury Tales' were published by Caxton. Before the close of the fifteenth century three more of the same work followed from the presses of his successors, Wynken de Worde and Pynson. Five large folio editions of his greatest work within a space of less than twenty-five years are sufficient to show that his fame had undergone no diminution in the century that had passed since his death. Nor does the list just given exhaust all the testimony of this nature. Many of the minor pieces were also printed, several of them several times. They were printed not only in England, but in Scotland. Three editions of the 'Troilus and Cressida' came out before it was included in the folio of 1532, which first contained the poet's collected works. There is no English writer either at that time or for a long period after who can point to such a record. Nor did the demand for Chaucer's productions cease during the course of the sixteenth century. It increased rather than diminished with the apparently liberal supply already furnished. Between 1532 and 1561, inclusive, a period of less than thirty years, in addition to the volumes of the separate poems already in circulation, the readers of that day were able to absorb four editions of his complete works. This simple bibliographical fact is a proof of his popularity which outweighs in the value of its testimony any-

thing and everything that can be drawn from the purely literary sources of the time, or that could be drawn from them were they as abundant as they are actually scanty. For these folios were bulky volumes, which it required money to buy as well as strength to handle. At that time, too, the population of England was comparatively small. Of that small population the reading public was comparatively limited. We must come to very modern times before anything approaching this popularity can be predicated of any poet.

It can undoubtedly be conceded that something of the interest taken in Chaucer during the sixteenth century was not a legitimate literary interest. It was due to causes quite distinct from those which had given him his previous popularity. I have pointed out in a preceding chapter that he at that time gained repute for reasons of which he himself could hardly have dreamed, and that he was credited with a character at which he would have been the first to smile.[1] It was not always the poet that was admired so much as the supposed reformer. Not for the beauty of his verse, but for the keenness of his satire and the exposure of the rottenness of the religious life of his time, did he become a favorite of the fierce Puritan element that saw in the papal church the mystic Babylon foretold in Apocalyptic vision, which sat upon the seven hills, and was drunk with the blood of the saints. To denounce that church was a duty. To be thought to have early denounced it entitled one to a place among the forerunners of the Reformation. The ascription to Chaucer of

[1] See vol. ii., p. 463.

the spurious 'Plowman's Tale' gave the seal of certainty to the belief about him which men were predisposed to hold. After that production was regularly enrolled among his genuine works in the edition of 1542, the members of the Roman Catholic party were placed at a disadvantage, so far as he was concerned. It apparently never occurred to them to question the genuineness of the poem. All that was left, therefore, was to maintain a discreet silence about it, and about the religious views of its author.

Not so the Protestants. They were careful to bring him forward as one of their champions. We can see the sort of contest that raged about Chaucer's name in the account of his life as found in the respective collections of Bale and Pits. Almost the only addition that the former made to Leland's biography was a sentence indicative of the poet's hostile attitude towards the church of Rome. After giving a list of his works, Bale went on to say that he also "wrote many other things, in which he spoke with little approval of the idle life of the monks, the exceeding multitude of masses, the incomprehensible canonical hours, relics, pilgrimages and ceremonies."[1] To counteract the injurious attacks made by Bale upon the Roman Catholic clergy was the main cause which led Pits to prepare his account of English writers. This is explicitly asserted by William Bishop, who contributed the dedicatory preface to the volume, which was published after the author's death. He in-

[1] "Aliaque plura fecit, in quibus monachorum ocia, missantium tam magnam multitudinem, horas non intellectas, reliquias, perigrinationes ac cærimonias parum probavit."

forms us that Leland's work had been satisfactory, so far as it went. It seems, however, that some hell had vomited up a certain apostate called Bale, easily to be recognized by his name as a servant of the idol Baal. This man had gone about inveighing against the greatest popes and the most holy men. He had aspersed their lives, and had cast contumely upon their writings. To vindicate the ancient glory of these authors, and to keep the pestilent work of Bale out of the hands of the faithful, was the object Pits set out to accomplish. But while his professed aim was to clear English writers from the foul calumnies cast upon them in the work he was seeking to replace, it is noticeable that in the case of Chaucer he contented himself with merely omitting the added statement of Bale. He does not contradict it. Nor does he venture to deny the genuineness of the 'Plowman's Tale,' or make any effort to defend the poet from the charge of having attacked the superstitious practices of the Roman church. In so doing, or rather in so not doing, he followed the usual course of silence. But silence practically amounted to a confession that no defence could be maintained. The result was that Chaucer continued to be enrolled without protest among the forerunners of the Reformation.

This admiration of the poet, which had its origin in the belief of his being a Reformer, undoubtedly added largely to his popularity with the iconoclasts of the sixteenth century. The feeling extended to their descendants, who, in their zeal to extirpate everything that savored of Baal, as they regarded the papacy, overturned finally the church that was suspected of leaning towards

it and the government that was supposed to sympathize with the Romanizing tendencies of the church, and furnished England, in consequence, for two centuries with a not altogether savory royal martyr. Instances of this admiration crop out sometimes in the most unexpected quarters. Milton's acquaintance with his great predecessor might have been safely assumed, even had he never written a line in which his name was mentioned. But Chaucer continued a favorite of many of the rank and file of the educated class that were attached to the Puritan party. In the very midst of the civil war we find a curious correspondence going on between a Parliamentary officer and the poet Cleveland, who was acting at the time as judge advocate of the royalist garrison at Newark. In it each amiably endeavored to insult the other as far as was consistent with true politeness. In the course of the correspondence the Parliamentary officer draws one of his illustrations from Chaucer's writings. He makes mention of the Friar who pretended to cure souls with the shoulder-bone of one of the lost sheep.[1] The reference was in several ways a mistaken one. It attributed, in particular, to the Friar what should have been given to the Pardoner. But in the midst of military operations one can hardly be expected to carry about with him a heavy folio to refresh his memory and to verify quotations. It is not that such a reference to Chaucer's works is inaccurate which should excite surprise; it is that it should have ever been made at all.

Theology, like misery, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows. To modern eyes there is some-

[1] Cleveland's *Poems* (1665), p. 207.

thing almost grotesque in the fact that Chaucer should have been a favorite of the adherents of the stern creed of Calvin, who, not content with hating impurity, frowned upon pleasure. For if we accept Heine's distinction of the two great opposing forces in modern civilization, none have been more conspicuously the representatives of the Hebraic element than the Puritans of the sixteenth century. In them both its best and its worst aspects are to be found exemplified. On the other hand, of all the English poets no one is so fully the representative of the Hellenic element as Chaucer. No one has felt more keenly than he, and expressed more vividly, the joy of life as life. In him, too, can be recognized the Hellenic clearness of vision which saw human nature exactly as it was, and did not lack the courage to depict it. Equally in him can be found its freedom from excitement and passion which to many seems freedom from earnestness. Nowhere, indeed, is this more noticeable than in the calmness of his attitude towards the religious sentiment itself, not in the sense of being indifferent to it, but in the sense of looking upon it as one of many forces that influence life instead of embodying the one supreme object for which life is lived. That by any combination of circumstances the serious and even sombre Puritan element of the sixteenth century should have come to regard the poet of joyousness and gayety and chivalry as a burning and shining light in the religious world is one of those freaks of fancy which seem always happening as if designed to make perfectly clear the utter emptiness of the inferences of the reason. Still, to a great extent such was the fact. We can see, therefore, that in

the case of many it was not a love of literature that brought familiarity with Chaucer's writings, but admiration for his supposed theology. Least of all was it any disposition to tolerate impurity that led to their overlooking what may have seemed objectionable, or to their condoning what must have seemed sinful. They forgave the evil for the sake of the testimony that had been borne and for the service that had been rendered in the exposure of the corruptions that had poisoned the purity of the primitive faith. If this way of judging the character of a man's work be erroneous, it is by no means peculiar. There is a supply of modern illustrations of the same method of proceeding sufficiently ample to keep the Puritans in countenance. So long as Protestants of the nineteenth century are enabled to look upon Henry VIII. as a reformer, Protestants of the sixteenth century may be pardoned for treating Chaucer as a saint.

Something of the poet's repute was certainly due to this source, at least for a limited period. To suppose that much was due to it would be a great error. There is evidence, indeed, that Chaucer's writings were looked upon coldly by men of that class to whom all efforts of the creative imagination lack what they are pleased to call truth. So wide was his popularity, so universal was the acquaintance with his writings, that his greatest work came early to be almost a synonym for fictitious narrative of any sort. As such it would naturally fall under the ban of that somewhat dreary body of men, in whom the Anglo-Saxon race has always abounded, who look askance upon all literature which deals with matters

outside of the region of figures and facts. This class, often composed of good men, invariably of prosaic men, did not escape the observation of Chaucer himself. He represents as belonging to it his Parson, a man morally of a lofty type of character, but plainly marked in certain respects by intellectual narrowness. When he comes to tell his story he informs his auditors that in anything he says he will not deviate in the slightest degree from the truth. "Fables and such wretchedness" is the comprehensive term he applies to everything that is not in accordance with actual fact. Why should he sow chaff, he asks, when it is in his power to sow wheat? This is the spirit with which he introduces his own didactic and rather dull discourse. It is a spirit of a precisely similar nature that is exhibited in the famous Retractation appended to the 'Canterbury Tales.' The genuineness of the addition can only be conceded on the assumption that the poet, at a period of life when physical and intellectual strength were failing, had fallen under the influence of men of very earnest convictions and of very limited ideas.

If Chaucer could put into the mouth of one of his own characters a comment that implied that nearly everything which had been related during the pilgrimage was in the eyes of the speaker trivial, where it was not worse, we may be sure that criticism of the same kind did not die out in the centuries that followed. Much of what he wrote would have been ill-suited to the taste of the men who were engaged in the theological conflicts of the sixteenth century. That work of this nature did fall under their condemnation is clear from the con-

temptuous way in which a story, especially improbable, came to be termed a Canterbury tale. Here again the fury of religious controversy added its intensity of meaning to an estimate which was based primarily upon dulness of apprehension and incapacity of appreciation. With the primacy of Canterbury the papacy was, from the nature of things, largely identified. The pilgrimage to the shrine of its martyred archbishop had been the most famous of all while England remained under the sway of the Roman church. It was natural that any phrase which disparaged it should become a popular one with the reforming party. It enabled its members to fling contempt upon the side they hated without appearing to make a direct attack. "If we take it," said Cranmer, speaking of the gospel, "for a Canterbury tale, why do we not refuse it?"[1] Language of this kind—and it is but one instance out of many—shows decisively the existence of a general acquaintance with the poet's greatest work. But it likewise gives the impression that to some serious souls the matter it contained was vanity, as to dull souls it undoubtedly was vexation of spirit. Had not Chaucer's value as an ally come early to be recognized, it is not improbable that many of the voices which blessed his memory would have hastened to bestow upon it some vigorous maledictions.

It is not, however, to the men who were taking part in the stormy religious controversies of the period that we are to look for genuine appreciation of the poet as poet. Fortunately, we do not need to look to them. The recognized superiority of Chaucer down to the end

[1] Cranmer's *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters*, p. 198 (Parker Society).

of the sixteenth century can be easily demonstrated by an appeal to sources that are purely literary. It remained undisputed, although the effects that result from the changes that had taken place in the language had begun to operate. These necessarily gave to all that he wrote a sense of remoteness and strangeness, and to some of it obscurity and even incomprehensibility. Still, on the part of the greatest men of letters there prevailed a loyalty to his memory that permitted no one to occupy a place by his side. In the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' Chaucer is styled "the god of shepherds," which is explained in the glossary as signifying "the god of poets." The phrase, after its appearance in this work, was henceforth specifically applied to him by the critical writers of the time. He is so termed by Webbe in his 'Discourse of English Poetry,' and by Meres in his 'Palladis Tamia.' But references to him of all sorts abound in the sixteenth century. They embrace numerous names, from Ascham, who about the middle of it styles Chaucer the English Homer, to Camden, who towards the end of it uses of him the same phrase, and asserts that he had left far behind all others who had written since. Of these he spoke with unnecessary asperity, but in the true antiquarian spirit, as poetasters. Besides these two celebrated scholars, the early poet was made the subject of panegyric by a number of authors, the chief claim of some of whom to mention now is that they mentioned Chaucer then. There are too many of these references to be quoted, and the most important of them are too well known to need quotation.

There is one man, however, whose words cannot be

passed over without attention. This was Edmund Spenser. For the influence exerted over him by Chaucer, and for the influence exerted by him over others; for the loftiness of his own literary position, and the fulness of his acknowledgment of what he owed to his predecessor, he stands in a peculiar relation to the founder of English literature. Of all the admirers of the early poet who flourished at that period, Spenser was the most emphatic in his praise. Of all his readers, he was the most profoundly influenced by his language and literary methods. His admiration began early. It continued to increase till the time when, expiring in wretchedness and want, his dying request was that his body might be laid by the side of the master he loved and honored. The epithet he applied to him in his first work has already been given. But there are many other passages in the 'Shepherd's Calendar' in which he gives expression to his feelings of regard. To Tityrus, as he uniformly designates his predecessor, he acknowledges that he owes everything. He it was who had first taught him how to write. He it was who knew best of all how to bewail the woes of love. If upon him, homely shepherd as he was, some portion of that mighty spirit's poetic inspiration should fall, he soon could teach trees and forests to sympathize with sorrows of his own.

It is noticeable that in the passage of the 'Shepherd's Calendar' in which Spenser makes the fullest admission of the obligations he was under to his predecessor, he asserted that Chaucer's reputation was steadily increasing. The poet was gone, he tells us. Gone, too, was his surpassing skill,

"The fame whereof doth daily greater grow."[1]

This was no mere language of compliment. It indicated a condition of things in exact accordance with fact. The 'Shepherd's Calendar' appeared in 1579. At that date, the authors who were to make the Elizabethan age renowned were mostly in their minority. The drama, the great national literature of the time, had not yet emancipated itself from the bondage of ryme. Not yet had Marlowe's "mighty line" revealed the possibilities that lay in blank verse. Chaucer, in spite of his ill-understood grammar, his misunderstood versification, and his obsolete words, continued yet to reign without a rival. In the general intellectual movement then going on in England, interest in him as being still far its greatest author naturally increased rather than diminished. The difficulties which soon afterwards kept most men from the perusal of his writings acted then rather as a stimulant to their study. In his letter of June, 1597, the dramatist Beaumont reminds his friend Speght of the zeal in this direction that had prevailed during their university life. "And here," he writes, "I cannot forget to remember unto you those ancient learned men of our time in Cambridge, whose diligence in reading of his works themselves, and commending them unto others of the younger sort, did first bring you and me in love with him; and one of them at that time, and all his life after, was (as you know) one of the rarest men for learning in the whole world."

Spenser's direct obligations to Chaucer are numerous. All his writings show intimate acquaintance with those

[1] *Shepherd's Calendar*, June, line 92.

of his predecessor. In the extent of his imitations, and in the frequency of his references to the events and personages made famous by the elder poet, he rivals the Scotch authors of whom mention has already been made. He attempted a more daring experiment. In the fourth book of the 'Fairy Queen,' he ventured to add a conclusion to the Squire's tale. He looked upon the poem as having been actually completed by Chaucer. The disappearance of the original ending he imputed to the ravages of time, which had so often wrought ruin to the "works of heavenly wits." The task of restoring the conclusion, which he fancied lost, was something beyond the achievement of his powers, great as they were. A similar attempt was made before his time, and some have been made since. Where Spenser failed, it is vain to expect others to succeed. The poem, like the unfinished column of Aladdin's palace, will remain forever as it was left by the mighty magician who had reared the stately structure which none but he could bring to perfection. But no finer tribute has been paid to any poet than this apologetic verse with which Spenser introduces his attempt:

"Then pardon, O most sacred happy spirit!
That I thy labors lost may thus revive,
And steal from thee the meed of thy due merit,
That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
And being dead in vain yet many strive:
Ne dare I like; but through infusion sweet
Of thine own spirit which doth in me survive,
I follow here the footing of thy feet,
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet."

Spenser's admiration for Chaucer, combined with his own pre-eminent position as a poet, exerted for a time a peculiar influence upon versification and language. The Elizabethan age is to us above everything else a creative age. For that very reason there has come largely to exist an impression that in no respect was it a critical age. The general idea is that men contented themselves with doing and saying great things, and left it to the art of later times to describe the things they did, and how and why they happened so to do them. But this is limiting our attention to the purely external aspects of the period. It entirely hides from us the view of much of its inner intellectual life. The literary agitation was as pronounced as the political or religious, though its manifestations naturally do not appear to the world on so grand a scale. The attempt to confine the new wine of what we should call romanticism in the old classical bottles produced just the same violent ferment that has marked the history of many later commotions of the same general nature, though the controversies to which they then gave rise have received scant notice at the hands of critics and historians. Upon nearly every question men at that time were drawn up in hostile camps. The period was one of conflict, almost of revolution. Everything was untried; everything, therefore, remained to be tried. In a general way, it can be said that a battle went on actively between the partisans of the purely classical movement and the partisans of the modern movement which had taken unto itself no specific name. There was a time when it might have looked to a superficial observer as if the

former would triumph. The human mind was shaking off the trammels of ecclesiastical and political servitude; but into literary servitude it seemed bent to enter of its own accord.

This tendency was displayed at the outset in the great national literature of the time, the drama. In that the contest between the adherents and the opponents of the doctrine of the unities was as earnest and even as virulent as any that has raged since, though it has left the record of its strife rather in chance allusions than in controversial pamphlets bearing directly upon the subject. Still, Sidney was as earnest in denouncing the neglect of the unities of time and place as he was in exposing the grossest absurdities that had then found a home upon the stage. The observance of them was accepted and taught by Ben Jonson with an unreservedness that would have satisfied the most exacting critic of the eighteenth century. In practice he conformed to his theory with exceeding precision, so far as his comedies were concerned. There can be little question that it was his great contemporary's general disregard of the unities to which he referred when he told Drummond of Hawthornden that Shakspeare wanted art. That the supremest of dramatic poets deliberately emancipated himself from their tyranny is made certain by the fact that at times he as deliberately submitted to it. He could have been neither unacquainted with nor indifferent to a question the merits of which he must have heard discussed daily. It was not ignorance or carelessness, therefore, that led him to reject in his general practice the observance

of this doctrine. It was conviction founded upon the study of his art. In this matter he put himself not accidentally, but advisedly, in opposition to the partisans of the purely classical school. Yet at times he conformed to their views. In the case of one of his later pieces he makes his conformity noticeable. No one can read the 'Tempest,' with this matter before his mind, and fail to observe how persistently attention is called to the unity of time. Again and again, in the course of the play, reference is made to the hour when the action begins and to the hour when it is to end. The stress which is laid upon this one point proves unmistakably that there was a deliberate design to make it prominent. It leads naturally to the conclusion that in this particular piece Shakspeare set out to show his critics what he could do in this method, if he were disposed to accept the doctrine which he rejected.

But a controversy which indirectly affected Chaucer was that which went on in regard to the proper method of versification. A persistent effort was made at this period by a clamorous, if not very numerous, party to banish ryme from poetry. In one form of it the movement met with success. Blank verse, introduced into the language by Surrey, introduced into the drama by Sackville, and perfected by Marlowe, took possession of the stage, and gave the play-writer an instrument of expression which adapted itself with equal fitness and facility to the level of ordinary conversation and to the highest flights of the imagination. But a half-way course, which, while using a ryming measure, contented itself with merely stripping it of ryme, was not one which

satisfied the adherents of the classical school. Ascham early pointed out that blank verse was good so far as it went, but that it did not go far enough. It observed, he said, just measure and even feet; but its feet were not distinct by true quantity of syllables. It was no negative result of this sort which the men who shared his views were aiming to bring about. They sought to introduce the ancient measures, they wished to make them the exclusive representatives of the metrical moulds into which poetical expression should be cast. The employment of these measures was pressed with urgency by a body of scholars possessed of much learning, but in this matter not possessed of much intelligence. Lumbering hexameters and dolorous sapphics consequently made their appearance in English literature. Other classical measures were recommended for adoption. These were not to take their place by the side of ryme as a supplementary method of versification. They were to take the place of it. Ryming was to be driven out entirely. The great Greek and Roman writers had avoided it; therefore it was a thing to be avoided as bad in itself. The partisans of the classical school accordingly agreed in condemning its employment. They repeated Ascham's assertion that ryme was a rude and barbarous invention, first brought into use by the Goths and Huns, and then unhappily introduced into the modern literatures of Europe by men of excellent wit, it is true, but of little learning and of less judgment. Hence the substitution of it for the ancient classic measures was the principal thing needed to lift English poetry from the degradation into which it had fallen.

The feeling operated curiously upon literary judgments. It led to a fanciful admiration of the 'Vision of Piers Plowman.' This poem gained for a while a species of fictitious reputation with the adherents of the classical school because it lacked ryme, and was therefore ignorantly supposed to represent a verse founded upon quantity. "As Homer," says Meres in 'Palladis Tamia,' "was the first that adorned the Greek tongue with true quantity, so Piers Plowman was the first that observed the true quantity of our verse without the curiosity of ryming." This same sentiment about the classical measures affected also to a certain degree the estimation in which Chaucer himself was held in the sixteenth century. Something of the admiration bestowed upon him was tempered by the feeling that in the matter of metrical measures he had subordinated his genius to the demands of a barbarous age. He had no more ardent admirer than Ascham; but that scholar could not but deplore that the English Homer, as he calls him, had not followed the best examples in versification, so as not to have been led by time and custom to content himself with rude and beggarly ryming. But even more than it affected the estimate of the poet did it affect the belief that prevailed as to the character of the metre he employed. Knowledge of its nature was revived in the last century by Tyrwhitt. The question naturally arises, When did ignorance of its nature begin, or at least become universal? How far did there exist in the sixteenth century acquaintance with the peculiarities of Chaucer's verse? To what extent were his lines then believed to be exact and harmonious? What means

existed, if any existed at all, to remove apparent irregularities?

On the general question we have conflicting statements. "For his verses," writes Speght, in his prefatory address, "although in divers places they may seem to us to stand of unequal measures, yet a skilful reader that can scan them in their nature shall find it otherwise. And if a verse here and there fall out a syllable shorter or longer than another, I rather aret[1] it to the negligence and rape[2] of Adam Scrivener, that I may speak as Chaucer doth, than to any uncunning or oversight in the author." This passage appears in the edition of 1602, but not in that of 1598. There is every reason to believe, in consequence, that it owes its inspiration, if not even its wording, to the antiquary Francis Thynne. When this folio was reprinted in 1687, the address to the readers was retained in its entirety. It was the doctrine laid down in the sentences that have just been quoted which Dryden controverted in the famous critical essay he prefixed to his modernizations. He, indeed, seems to have taken it as the view of the contemporary editor. He insisted strongly that there was no regularity in many of Chaucer's lines, and that there was no system of scansion by which they could be made regular. The theory set forth in this prefatory address was, in his opinion, manifestly wrong. From the point of view of the seventeenth century, and with the knowledge possessed by it, wrong it certainly was.

Moreover, in spite of Speght's assertion, it is questionable if the sixteenth century was, in this respect, much

[1] Impute. [2] Haste.

better off than the seventeenth. There is reason to believe that the former found trouble in reading Chaucer's poetry of the same kind as did the latter, though by no means to the same degree. At almost its very beginning there occur passages which give the impression that difficulty had been experienced with his versification. Skelton, in his poem of 'Philip Sparrow,' devotes a passage to the consideration of the English tongue, which he speaks of as rude and unpolished. In the course of it he refers to the language of Chaucer as

> "At those dayes moch commended,
> And now men wolde have amended
> His Englysh, wherat they barke,
> And mar all they warke." 796–799.

Later in the century we find a positive statement to the effect that the poet's lines were irregular. Gascoigne, in his 'Instructions concerning the Making of Verse and Rhyme in English,' accompanying an edition of his poems printed in 1575, asserts the fact in unmistakable language. "Our father Chaucer," he wrote, "hath used the same liberty in feet and measures that the Latinists do use; and whosoever do peruse and well consider his works, he shall find that although his lines are not always of one self-same number of syllables, yet being read by one that hath understanding the longest verse and that which hath most syllables in it will fall (to the ear) correspondent unto that which hath fewest syllables in it, and likewise that which hath in it fewest syllables shall be found yet to consist of words that have such natural sound as may seem equal in length to a verse which hath many mo syllables of lighter accent."

Here we find in the quotation just given the influence of the extreme classical school asserting itself. Irregularity on the part of the early writers was imputed to their credit. It evinced a noble disdain of the senseless and monotonous jingle which had come to be the normal rule of poetry. There was, therefore, a tendency to regard unevenness, or rather ruggedness, as a virtue, instead of deploring it as a defect. By men who looked upon ryming verse as a monstrosity, preservation of the harmony of ryming verse would not seem a matter of consequence. One reason, therefore, why regularity of accent was not believed to exist was because men did not wish to find it. To have a different number of syllables in the lines, but to have the lines when properly pronounced of the same length, was to say that there was an approach, at least, to the classical standard, in which the verse was governed by quantity, and not dependent upon equality of syllables. To this extent Chaucer then gained repute with some for what would be deemed by most a fault. He was praised for it then. Praise of the same sort has been repeated in modern times. During the centuries that have followed the invention of printing, there have always been those who have taken pleasure, or at any rate have expressed pleasure, in his assumed homeliness of versification. This was not invariably due to antiquarian taste, though, as we shall see later, it was in some instances. But at all times there exists a body of men, which body at certain times grows to be comparatively numerous, who come to have a feeling of positive dislike for the smoothness and harmony of the poetic forms in established use. They

are possessed by a fondness for the outlandish, the bizarre, or at least the unusual. This fondness does not extend very wide, nor does it continue for a very long period. It is limited to a small class; but as that class is almost always composed of men of more than ordinary acquirements and ability, it is apt to produce for the while it lasts a good deal of an impression. In the sixteenth century this feeling occasionally combined itself with the movement that went on against ryme. The assumed irregularity of Chaucer's versification was accordingly looked upon by all such adherents of the classical party as something for which he was to be honored. He had not freed himself from the barbarousness of ryme; but he had, to some extent, observed quantity.

It is clear from what has been said that a conflict of opinion existed at the time in regard to the regularity of Chaucer's versification. Here it is that Spenser's practice enables us to ascertain the nature and the degree of the knowledge that then prevailed upon the subject. An examination of his poems shows the existence of certain characteristics which, though obsolete in the common speech, still retained poetic vitality. It also shows, to a slight extent, the employment by him of grammatical forms which had died out of the language entirely. The list of these peculiarities is not a long one. The *en* of the infinitive and of the plural of the present tense, and the *ed* of the preterite and of the past participle, could constitute a distinct syllable. So, also, could the *es* of the genitive singular and of the plural. The *eden* of the preterite plural was occasionally used to form two syllables. As two syllables also appeared frequently, the

termination *ion*, with the principal accent resting upon the final one. At times, moreover, though not often, words such, for instance, as *carriage* were pronounced as if they contained three syllables. In this way the normal measure of the verse could be maintained. All these things belong to the versification of Chaucer, and their application to his lines will in many instances relieve them of seeming irregularities. Spenser exemplifies them all. One characteristic, however, of his predecessor that is lacking entirely in him is the pronunciation of the final *e*. Knowledge of that was, to all appearance, wholly lost. Variation of accent also existed on a very limited scale. As practised by Chaucer, it was certainly not well understood. The *on* of the termination *ion* did receive the principal accent, it is true, and in this the early poet's example was followed. But so, also, did the *ed* of the past participle receive the principal accent, and in this his example was not followed. There are lines in Spenser in which the principal accent falls even upon *eth*, the termination of the third person singular of the present tense of the verb. This would have been impossible to Chaucer, and, indeed, has been exceedingly rare in English versification at any period.

These are the facts that can be gathered from the practice of Spenser. They show what are the rules that were adopted by a diligent student of Chaucer for the purpose of reading his verse as he supposed the author intended it to be read. But while the observance of these rules would make many lines harmonious, it would not so affect them all. Against that the failure to pronounce the final *e* was an absolute barrier. The

result was that even among the professed disciples of the elder poet a certain degree of ruggedness was conceded to his metre. It is in the two productions entitled 'Mother Hubbard's Tale' and 'Colin Clout 's Come Home Again' that we find the most palpable illustrations of Spenser's imitation of his predecessor's versification, and almost the only illustrations of roughness in his own versification. It is the former of these pieces that is usually spoken of as having owed its inspiration directly to the 'Canterbury Tales.' This seems a view for which there is no justification. The custom of imputing to beasts the thoughts and actions of men is too ancient and too general to be regarded as the exclusive property of any one author. Neither of the two productions mentioned can be deemed an imitation of Chaucer's matter, or even of his manner. The resemblances in this respect are purely superficial. Spenser's poetic quality is something so distinct from that of Chaucer's that he would have been unable to succeed in such an imitation had he tried, and there is no evidence that he tried. He was, in fact, too great a poet to be a thorough-going imitator of even so great a poet as Chaucer. But while both his matter and manner were essentially different from his predecessor's, he did strive in the pieces mentioned to reproduce, so far as in him lay, his method of versification. He who reads, in particular, 'Mother Hubbard's Tale' will gain a fair conception of the way in which Chaucer sounded to the men of the sixteenth century. There are lines in this piece that lack the proper number of syllables. There are lines that are remarkable for nothing so much as for their lack of harmony. There

are entire passages that are throughout written in what would strike us as a lame and halting metre.[1] In a writer whose natural melody is almost cloying in its smoothness and sweetness, such a deviation from his usual practice could not be due to accident. It was the result of design. It was adopted for no other reason than that Chaucer was believed to have furnished the example of this sort of ruggedness in the measure.

The view just given of Spenser's versification enables us, accordingly, to make with comparative safety certain general statements about the extent of the knowledge of Chaucer's versification which existed in the sixteenth century. For most educated men the harmony of his numbers had disappeared almost entirely. All he could rely upon for the maintenance of his reputation was the weight of his matter—a very insecure foundation for permanent fame in an art to which beauty of form is as essential as beauty of conception. With men of letters, however, who were special students of his verse, there existed devices to give regularity to many, perhaps to most, of his lines. When all means known to these failed, the lack of regularity was either imputed to indifference on his part, or the burden, which was too heavy for him as a poet to bear, was transferred to the broader shoulders of the unknown and depraved but much-enduring scribe. It is evident that even this limited acquaintance with his methods of versification was confined to a small class which had a steady tendency to become smaller. As familiarity with his versification was not founded upon perfect knowledge, it was merely

[1] See, for illustration, lines 142–146, 183–188, 211–214, 515–540, etc.

a question of time when it should become more and more vague in its character, and at last disappear entirely. That result was speedily to overtake it. Perhaps it was hastened rather than hindered by the contest that comes now to be considered, which went on in regard to language.

Among the Elizabethan writers there were two parties that held very diverse views in regard to the diction of poetry. At the head of one of these was Spenser. On account of his conspicuous position his words are the ones mainly to be considered. We do not need to go outside of his practice to find his theory best exemplified. In his eyes Chaucer is the representative of all that is best and purest in language, at least in the language of poetry. He is, as he terms him, "the well of English undefiled." To revive his forgotten words or forgotten meanings, to make use of his abandoned inflections, so far as could be done, was an object he kept steadily in view. His ideas were formulated in the prefatory letter to Gabriel Harvey, signed E. K., which accompanied the 'Shepherd's Calendar' on its publication in 1579. In this the employment of old and obsolete words was defended as bringing grace and authority to the verse. "In my opinion," says the writer, "it is one special praise of many which are due to this poet, that he hath labored to restore as to their rightful heritage such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use and clean disherited. Which is the only cause that our mother tongue, which truly of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time been counted most bare and barren of

both." The writer of this prefatory epistle then proceeds to censure those who have attempted to patch up the deficiencies in the language by borrowing here and there of the French and Italian, and everywhere of the Latin. He furthermore attacks those who are so ignorant of their own speech as to cry out against old English words, even though natural and significant. Of these he speaks with undisguised contempt. Their "first shame," he remarks, "is that they are not ashamed in their own mother tongue to be counted strangers and aliens."

Spenser did not limit himself in his choice of words to the works, genuine or spurious, of Chaucer. Still, it was from them that he drew a large proportion of the archaic vocabulary and grammar he employed.[1] His influence was so wide in his own time that his course of conduct begot many imitators. To use the obsolete words of the early poet, or still existing words in the obsolete senses they had in his time, or to lengthen the line by the use of his obsolete inflections, became to some extent a literary fashion. It frequently met with praise from men who in their own writings did not follow the practice. It is the subject of special commendation paid to Spenser himself in the letter that the dramatist Beaumont wrote to Speght. "His much frequenting of Chaucer's ancient words," he said, "with his excellent imitation of diverse places in him, is not the least help that hath made him reach so high as many

[1] In the appendix to the first volume of Grosart's *Works of Spenser*, p. 408 ff., there is a list given of about 550 words and phrases that are declared to have been taken from the Lancashire dialect. It is well within bounds to say of those that are in any way distinctive that for much the larger number of them it is not necessary to go outside of Chaucer's works.

learned men do think that no poet, either French or Italian, deserves a second place under him."

On the other hand, there was a party which from the very outset looked upon this practice with undisguised hostility. Sidney, to whom the 'Shepherd's Calendar' was dedicated, cannot in this matter be reckoned among the adherents of Spenser. While approving the poetry of that work, he hesitatingly expressed his disapprobation of the archaic and dialectic terms in which it abounded. "That same framing of his style," he wrote, "to an old rustic language I dare not allow." Puttenham was more outspoken. "Our maker, therefore, at these days," he said, "shall not follow Piers Plowman, nor Gower, nor Lydgate, nor yet Chaucer, for their language is now out of use with us." The poet Daniel, himself deeply interested in questions of speech and versification, put himself speedily upon record in the discussion of this matter, as he did in the controversy in regard to ryme. He was a sincere admirer of Spenser; yet in 1592 he attacked the obsolete diction of the 'Fairy Queen,' the first three books of which had been published two years before.

> "Let others sing of knights and paladins
> In aged accents and untimely words,"

are the lines with which he begins the fifty-second of his sonnets to Delia. Edmund Bolton, the antiquarian writer, is even more explicit. His 'Hypercritica' is thought to have been written about 1610, though it was not published until 1722. In it he has one section devoted to the works of the authors who are to be looked upon as

authorities for the choice of words. These he speaks of as "prime gardens for gathering English according to the true gage and standard of the tongue about sixteen years ago." He is remarkable for directly denying the authority of Spenser. His 'Hymns,' indeed, he recommends. Not so his more famous works. "I cannot advise," he writes, "the allowance of other his poems, as for practick English, no more than I can do Geff. Chaucer, Lydgate, Peirce Ploughman and Laureate Skelton." Bolton, indeed, is speaking of the diction which a writer of history should employ. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that he would have condemned the use of Spenser's language in poetry. But a name greater than any that has been mentioned is on record as having attacked the introduction of obsolete words without limiting the view to any particular subject. Upon this very point Ben Jonson expressed himself strongly. In the remarks upon language contained in his 'Discoveries,' he censures those who affect archaic expressions as, he says, "some do Chaucerisms with us, which were better expunged and banished."

There was, in some measure, justification for the course taken by Spenser and his imitators. A revival of the poetic words of the past is to a certain extent not undesirable nor ineffective. It is something that is going on at the present time. But one essential condition of the permanence of its success is that it shall go on slowly. The appearance of a small number of archaic words and forms will be tolerated, especially in poetry, and will even be welcomed. But if the language is overloaded with them, the object of their introduction is defeated.

The moment that the study of literature pure and simple is turned into the study of the grammar and the lexicon, it has failed not merely in its main object, but also in its support of the auxiliary cause for which it has sacrificed itself. Poetry ceases to be a pleasure or an inspiration as soon as it begins to need the constant help of an interpreter. Whatever temporary success the caprice of fashion may give it, failure in the long run is inevitable. The things that were intended to attract, which perhaps for a time do attract, become eventually the things that repel. Spenser's archaisms are a case in point. He is an author who has always been reckoned among the very greatest of English poets. He has been a special favorite with poets themselves. Yet he has never been able to make his vocabulary live, so far as it differed from the common vocabulary of his time. None of the large number of the obsolete and dialectic words he introduced survived their introduction. None became so familiar through his writings as finally to incorporate themselves into the speech. They are as strange to us now as they were to his contemporaries. Their very number caused them to crowd each other to death. They did even more than destroy their own life: they made his writings difficult to read, and therefore comparatively little read.

There was, besides, something more than this to account for the failure. Ben Jonson, who was a scholar, saw at once what was the real difficulty in the matter. "Spenser," he said, "in affecting the ancients writ no language." This expresses the actual condition of things, even were we to concede that Jonson himself did not understand the full purport of what he was saying. The

faults of Spenser's vocabulary are largely of a quite different character from that commonly imputed to them. It is not that he brought together the language of the past and of the present, the speech of the educated man and of the rustic, and fashioned from it a dialect which nobody who lived at any time or at any place ever spoke. This is, of course, true. Still, its truth might be conceded by an admirer of the poet who did not feel that it was a serious charge against the diction he employed. But it is far from being the whole truth. Spenser's errors were of a different and graver character. He failed frequently to understand the words and grammar of the author he admired. Hence his revivals of Chaucer are often not revivals of the past, but pure creations of his own fancy, to which nothing similar ever existed in reality. He coins words under the apparent impression that they were ones that had issued from the mint of his predecessor. He gives to words he adopted from Chaucer meanings they never had in the writings of the latter, or in those of any one else. He adds new terminations to old words, in order to make them suitable for ryme. One instance of his understanding or misunderstanding will be sufficient to show the general nature of the mistakes he was always liable to make, and frequently did make. In Anglo-Saxon the irregular verb *gân*, 'to go,' had as a preterite *eode*. In later English this preterite appeared in several forms, of which *yede* and *yode* are both found. The former occurs in Chaucer, though not frequently. Spenser, instead of looking upon them as variants of the same word, regarded them as two different parts of the same strong verb. With him *yode* appears as a preterite and

*yede* or *yeede* as an infinitive. It is sufficient to say that as an infinitive *yede* had no real existence. No illustration of its employment can be met with outside of his pages or possibly the pages of some of his imitators, or of one or two of his contemporaries who had committed independently the same error.

It is therefore just to say in qualified terms what Jonson said in sweeping ones, that, as a result of his affecting the speech of Chaucer, "Spenser writ no language." He became at times a difficult author, not so much because his words had only an obsolete existence as because they had never had any existence at all. His imitations of his predecessor's vocabulary were largely spurious. They were therefore foredoomed to failure. To revive the past of a language is a sufficiently arduous undertaking. But to give life to a supposed past that was never a present is something quite beyond the power of a genius greater than was even that of Spenser. Yet there seems to be a fatality about Chaucer in causing the best scholars to make the worst blunders. No one who comes even remotely within the sphere of his influence seems capable of resisting the infection. We can naturally find traces of it in the comments made in regard to the efforts avowedly put forth in the sixteenth century to reproduce his diction. Malone, who was usually as accurate as he was dull—it is not easy to give higher praise to his accuracy—ventured to contradict Ben Jonson in his criticism of Spenser's imitation of the ancient English writers. "The language of the 'Fairy Queen,'" he wrote, "was the poetical language of the age in which he lived; and, however obsolete it might ap-

pear to Dryden, was, I conceive, perfectly intelligible to every reader of poetry in the time of Queen Elizabeth, though the 'Shepherd's Calendar' was not even then understood without a commentary."[1] This statement was quoted approvingly by Todd in his edition of Spenser's works. It served him as a starting-point from which to enlarge still further the circle of ignorance and misrepresentation. Not satisfied with adopting the view just set forth, he went on to speak of Malone as having declared that Jonson's criticism was directed only against the 'Shepherd's Calendar' and not against the 'Fairy Queen' —which is something that was neither true of what Jonson said, nor of what Malone said that he had said.[2] Modern linguistic study has made it clear that the language of the 'Fairy Queen' was the poetical language of the day only so far as the authority of Spenser made it so. His authority was not sufficient to perpetuate it. If the archaisms he borrowed ever renew their life in these later days, it will be because they have become familiar to us in the authors from whom he mainly took them, and not because they have become familiar to us in his pages, where they still seem out of place.

These attempts at reviving the versification and vocabulary of Chaucer are sufficient of themselves to show how potent his influence still continued to remain in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Abundant proofs of this fact lie everywhere upon the surface, and convey, one would suppose, their own lesson. Yet the lesson has rarely been learned. It has been necessary, in con-

[1] Dryden's *Prose Works*, vol. iii., p. 94 (note).

[2] Todd's *Spenser*, vol. i., p. clxiii.

sequence, to give the details in full because the opposite view has often been promulgated. There is nothing connected with Chaucer's life and writings that has not been the subject of mistake and misunderstanding, and that too frequently in quarters where it would have been little expected. The question of Chaucer's reputation in the Elizabethan age furnishes no exception. Much stress need not be laid upon the blunder of a writer like Hippisley, who tells us that, with the exception of Beaumont and Puttenham, "there is scarcely any distinct recognition of the poetical merits of the 'Canterbury Tales' anterior to Dryden."[1] But there is something to cause surprise in the astounding comparison between the reputations of Chaucer and Gower that was made by so distinguished a pioneer in Early-English study as Marsh. That scholar, whose utterances were in general carefully guarded, asserts that for a long time the fame of the latter was much more extensive than that of the former. "His works," he writes, "as being of a higher moral tone, or at least of higher moral pretensions, and at the same time of less artificial refinement, were calculated to reach and influence a somewhat larger class than that which would be attracted by the poems of Chaucer, and consequently they seem to have had a wider circulation." This sentence does something more than convey a false impression. There is hardly a single statement of any sort in any part of it that is not hopelessly misleading. The reason given for the opinion which has just been quoted is full as extraordinary as the opinion itself. As the sole evidence of the asserted inferiority of Chau-

[1] Hippisley's *Chapters on Early English Literature*, p. 42.

cer's reputation to that of Gower, we are gravely told that the former is not mentioned by Shakspeare. On the other hand, the play of 'Pericles' is avowedly based upon the story of Apollonius of Tyre contained in the 'Confessio Amantis,' and the author of that work is besides introduced into the play by name, and performs the office of the chorus in the ancient drama. "There is no doubt," continues Mr. Marsh, "that the poem of Gower, however inferior to the work of his master, was much esteemed in his lifetime, and still enjoyed a high reputation in ages when Chaucer was almost forgotten. But posterity has reversed the judgment of its immediate predecessors; and though Gower will long be read, he will never again dispute the palm of excellence with the true father of English literature."[1]

Assertions of such a character, coming from such a source, have a tendency to discourage the expectation that we shall ever arrive at the truth about Chaucer on a single point. No more unauthorized and unwarranted inferences have ever been drawn from a single fact. It so happened, without doubt, that Chaucer's name was not mentioned by Shakspeare. But no reader of 'Troilus and Cressida' can possibly suppose the great dramatist to have been unfamiliar with the production of the early poet that bears the same title. The 'Midsummer-Night's Dream,' moreover, though not based upon the Knight's tale, contains passages that prove that portions of the latter work were before the mind of the writer while engaged in the composition of the

[1] *Origin and History of the English Language*, by George P. Marsh, 3d edition (1872), p. 439.

former. There are other evidences of Shakspeare's familiarity with both Chaucer and Gower besides those that have been specified. In this respect he was no different from his contemporaries. The Knight's tale, in particular, naturally attracted the attention of the dramatists of the Elizabethan age, who were always on the lookout for suitable material. Upon it was founded an early play called 'Palemon and Arcite' that has not come down. It was the work of Richard Edwards, and was produced in 1566 at Oxford University before Queen Elizabeth. A play with this title is also recorded by Henslowe under the year 1594 as having been acted four times.[1] From the same tale also was avowedly taken the drama called 'The Two Noble Kinsmen,' which, when first printed in 1634, had on its title-page as authors the names of Shakspeare and Fletcher. Whether either had anything to do with it is still a debated question; but the tribute paid to Chaucer in the prologue furnishes important evidence as to the estimation in which the early poet continued to be held. Nominal supremacy must at least have been conceded to the man about whom lines like the following could be written:

"Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives;
There constant to eternity it lives.
If we let fall the nobleness of this,
And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
How will it shake the bones of that good man,
And make him cry from under ground, 'O, fan
From me the witless chaff of such a writer,
That blasts my bays and my famed works makes lighter

[1] *Diary of Philip Henslowe*, pp. 41, 43, and 44.

Than Robin Hood!' This is the fear we bring;
For to say truth, it were an endless thing,
And too ambitious to aspire to him.
Weak as we are, and almost breathless swim
In this deep water, do but you hold out
Your helping hands, and we shall tack about,
And something do to save us; you shall hear
Scenes, though below his art, may yet appear
Worth two hours' travail. To his bones sweet sleep!
Content to you!"

The truth is that Chaucer's works had been from the very beginning one of the happy hunting-grounds to which the early playwrights resorted in their search for subjects and incidents. So much of the Elizabethan drama has irrecoverably perished that it would be impossible now to guess even approximately the extent to which this practice prevailed. Yet even in the former half of the sixteenth century Heywood had borrowed much from the poet in his interlude of 'The Pardoner and the Friar.' In it he incorporated almost the whole of the prologue to the Pardoner's tale. The story of Griselda, unfit as it is for dramatic representation, naturally could not escape. It had early become, and it long continued to be, exceedingly popular. It had been told again and again in song and ballad and prose narrative. It had given its name to a tune. The favor with which it was regarded, due perhaps to the unlikeness of the events it recorded to anything that ever happened in real life, led to its being turned into a play at the close of the sixteenth century. It was the joint work of Chettle, Decker, and Haughton. Their comedy, which went under the name of 'Patient Grissill,' was published in

1603. There was nothing in it, indeed, which proves absolutely the direct acquaintance of its authors with the story as found in the 'Canterbury Tales.' Still, that was the remote original to which all these various pieces owed their existence.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to introduce these additional details in regard to Chaucer's popularity in the time of Shakspeare, and especially his comparative popularity. It is difficult to comprehend how assertions of the character quoted could ever have been made by any one who had made the most superficial study of the writers of the past. For if there be one indisputable fact in literary history, it is that Gower did not have the fame of Chaucer in his own age, and that he has never had it in any age that followed. Upon this matter enough has been said in the preceding pages to show that the reputation for good sense and good taste of the contemporaries of the two poets needs no defence upon this score. The same remark can be made of their immediate successors. Later times continue to bear testimony similar to that furnished by the earlier. The mere fact that no edition of the 'Confessio Amantis' appeared from 1554 until 1857 disposes of itself of the fancy that Gower's popularity ever stood for a moment in rivalry with that of Chaucer. Caxton had, indeed, printed his poem. During the sixteenth century two other editions of it appeared. These were sufficient to supply the demand both for that time and for the three hundred years that followed. Nor are we confined to the evidence of bibliography to refute this absurd statement which derives importance only from the authority of the scholar

by whom it was made. The thinness of Gower was as well recognized by the men of the sixteenth century as was the greatness of Chaucer. His tediousness was as apparent then as it is now. The capacity of being bored by it was as well developed in the Elizabethan age as it is in the Victorian, though it had not then found that particular word to express the feeling. The critical references made to Gower at that time constantly imply his inferiority to Chaucer. In some instances they express it strongly. The general view is very effectively summed up by Puttenham in his 'Art of English Poesy.' "Gower," he wrote, "saving for his good and grave moralities, had nothing in him highly to be commended, for his verse was homely and without good measure, his words strained much deal out of the French writers, his ryme wrested, and in his inventions small subtility: the applications of his moralities are the best in him, and yet those many times very grossly bestowed, neither doth the substance of his works answer the subtility of his titles." The language of Drayton, more than a quarter of a century afterwards, is full as explicit and even more pointed. It appears in his account of the English poets that is contained in his 'Epistle to Henry Reynolds.' After speaking in the highest terms of Chaucer, he followed his commendation of that writer with this reference to his contemporary, which can certainly not be called complimentary, even if it escape the charge of being contemptuous:

> "And honest Gower, who in respect of him
> Had only sipped at Aganippe's brim,

> And though in years this last was him before,
> Yet fell he far short of the other's store."

I have taken great pains to bring out these points fully, for we are now approaching a period when the reputation of Chaucer is about to suffer a temporary eclipse. The knowledge of his versification had already disappeared largely; it was soon to disappear entirely. His language was speedily to become almost an unknown tongue. A few adventurous spirits were to be the only ones that would explore the literature of the fourteenth century. By some they would be regarded as heroes for their hardihood, and by most as asses for their pains. That neglect was about to overtake him was foreseen even by the men who admired him. Daniel, in his 'Musophilus,' anticipates it, but finds some consolation in reflecting upon the long period during which his fame had lasted. "Yet what a time," he wrote,

> " hath he wrested from Time,
> And won upon the mighty waste of days,
> Unto the immortal honor of our clime,
> That by his means came first adorned with bays;
> Unto the sacred relics of whose ryme
> We yet are bound in zeal to offer praise!"

This is in the nature of an elegy rather than of a eulogium. The very phrase "sacred relics" shows that to many, perhaps to most, the poet's language was beginning to partake of something of the nature of a dead tongue. Difficult to comprehend, impossible to read with smoothness, it could not much longer hope to compete in popular estimation with the works of the

great writers who were to make the Elizabethan age famous for all succeeding time.

The result, at any rate, cannot be disputed. It was in the seventeenth century, especially in the middle and the latter half of it, that the reputation of Chaucer touched the lowest point to which it ever fell. To a certain extent this was due to causes other than literary and linguistic. The men of that time were engaged in a political struggle of peculiar bitterness. It was largely based upon religious differences, and it culminated in civil war. The conflict of interests and views that raged for years stirred the feelings of all to the profoundest depths. In the turbid upheaval of passions that resulted, there was little attention paid to literature, pure and simple, of any kind. Poetry could not hold up its head in competition with controversial pamphlets that dealt with the exciting questions of the hour. This will account for something of the comparative neglect which overtook Chaucer's name and reputation. It will not account for it all. There is one fact that cannot be gainsaid or explained away. For eighty-five years no edition, complete or even partial, appeared of his poems in any form. From 1602 to 1687 there was not demand enough for his writings to cause a new impression of them to be printed. This is the longest period that has ever elapsed between the publication of his works from the time the art of printing was introduced into England. The eighteenth century was largely ignorant of him, and indifferent about him; it was usually severer in its criticism; but its record in the matter of the poet's popularity, so far as it can be

tested by the demand for his poetry, far surpasses that of the seventeenth.

I have quoted at the very beginning of this chapter the remark made in 1628 by Earle, in his 'Microcosmography.' Chaucer, according to him, continued to be called the greatest of English poets. But in the light of the facts just mentioned, it is clear that this had now become a purely conventional estimate. It was a traditional, not a real, acknowledgment of his superiority. It was still the correct remark to make, but it rarely represented genuine appreciation. It was the common voice, Earle said, that reckoned him at the head of English poets. It is probably true that this was the statement made commonly; but commonly made, it is to be feared, by those who read no poetry at all. Chaucer's works were rapidly taking their place among those which men do not really enjoy, but feel themselves obliged, under the pressure of society, to say that they do. His writings were accordingly spoken of with the highest respect; the reading of them was carefully avoided. The secret of his versification was gone. His matter now gave significant evidence that it was on its way to become the quarry of the antiquary rather than the solace of the lover of literature.

It is easy, of course, to get from this rapid summary an exaggerated estimate of the neglect into which the poet had fallen during the seventeenth century. It is his comparative popularity—comparative not merely with that of other writers of his grade, but with his own popularity at other times—that comes up here for consideration. His known admirers were not a few.

In many cases they are the greatest of the great. Every one is familiar with the allusion in 'Il Penseroso,' where Milton joins him with the elder mythical bards of Greece, in the famous invocation to

> "Call up him that left half told
> The story of Cambuscan bold;"

though the accentuation of the proper name may not be thought to indicate the later poet's familiarity with the earlier poet's versification. Still, there can be little doubt of Milton's full acquaintance with his predecessor's life, so far as it was then known. As little doubt is there of his admiration for his writings, based upon the fullest acquaintance with them. His own journey to Italy reminded him that Chaucer had been there before him. Tityrus, he tells Manso, formerly came to these shores.[1] Yet, outside of these two places, the references in his works to the early poet and his writings are to be found only in the battailous pamphlets directed against the prelacy. As was inevitable, the furious 'Plowman's Tale,' then universally accepted as genuine, was the particular piece to which he directed the attention of his readers. The fierceness of its invective accorded with his own feelings; the nature of its attack suited his purposes; but there is no reason to assume on that account that it was poetry that specially pleased his literary taste. Nor is there any ground for the assertion constantly made, that the Squire's tale was Milton's favorite, because it is the one alluded to in 'Il Penseroso.' Its introduction there merely fell in with the object at which he was aiming. That was

[1] "Quin et in has quondam pervenit Tityrus oras."—*Mansus*, line 34.

sufficient reason of itself for him to refer to it and to its characters.

In Milton's case, moreover, we are no longer limited to inferences drawn from his formal productions for our belief in his familiarity with the writings of his predecessor. In 1876, a commonplace book of his—perhaps one of a number he kept—was published by the Camden Society from the original manuscript. The work is full of citations from about a hundred authors. Only four English poets are quoted, however. Of two of these, Sidney and Spenser, the prose works alone are laid under contribution. But from Chaucer's writings there are several citations, and they touch upon various subjects. A passage is quoted approvingly from the tale of the Doctor of Physic, which treats of dangers to be avoided in the education of the young. It is a suggestive fact, also, that the democratic sentiments advanced in the 'Romance of the Rose' and in the Wife of Bath's tale had attracted the attention of the ardent republican who had thrown himself with a fervor so intense into the political conflicts of the time. Some, too, will see an ominous allusion to his own life in his brief reference to "the discommoditie of marriage," as shown in the Merchant's tale, and in the prologue to that of the Wife of Bath. Whatever may have been the feelings that these passages indicate, certain it is that they establish decisively the intimate acquaintance of the later poet with the writings of the earlier.

About the time, also, that Milton was likening the first great writer of our literature to Orpheus and Musæus in words which convey the impression that while

he was as reverend he was as little known as they, another peculiar tribute of admiration was laid at the feet of Chaucer. A most singular effort was made to introduce him to the knowledge of his countrymen by turning one of his productions into Latin. This was the work of Sir Francis Kinaston, who was attached to the household of Charles I. Kinaston was a most fervent admirer of the poet. By one of the Oxford men who contributed copies of verses to usher in his translation, he was styled more Geoffreyan than Chaucer himself.[1] He set out to render 'Troilus and Cressida' into Latin. In 1635 two books, the first instalment of his contemplated work, made their appearance. The original was on one page, the translation was on the page opposite. Outside of the reprint of the poem, furnished no doubt for the sake of comparison, there was no concession made to the mere English reader. The preface addressed to him was in Latin. So, also, were the two dedications of the first and second books, offered respectively to Patrick Junius, the king's librarian, and to John Rous, the librarian of the Bodleian. But though there was a general flavor of antiquity about the work, it was not the flavor of classical antiquity. The peculiarity of this version is that it followed the original closely in its metrical form. It had the same number of lines in the stanza; the same number of syllables in the line. This necessitated even a more marked deviation from the practice of the ancients. The translation was in rymed verse, and the rymes fol-

[1] "Kinastonum, Galfridiorem * * * Chaucero."—William Strode to the Translator.

lowed the order of the original. Kinaston tells us that it would have been far easier for him to have put it into classical hexameters and pentameters. He chose deliberately, however, the measure which has been described, though in many ways it was far more difficult, especially so on account of the monosyllabic character of the English tongue. It is plain that he anticipated a good deal of criticism for adopting this plan. In his preface and dedications he aimed to break the force of any hostile comments that might be made upon his verse by certain distinctly uncomplimentary references to the crabbed Aristarchs of the fastidious age, and by obvious allusions to the stolid and asinine ears of its sciolists.

The work is a curious one, alike for the motives that dictated it, and the end it sought to accomplish. It is one of several examples that give us an insight into the feelings that men entertained at that time both about the past and the future of our speech. Of this there will be need to speak in detail when we come to the eighteenth century. Here it is merely necessary to call attention to the reasons that largely led to the turning of the poet's writings into Latin. Kinaston tells us that he saw Chaucer coming daily to be held in cheaper estimation while clothed in the despised garments of the ancient English tongue. More than that, he saw him wasting away and, indeed, almost dead. From that deplorable condition he determined to rescue his reputation, so far as it lay in his power; to prop it up and secure it by the everlasting pillars of the Roman speech. Thereby his fame would be made stable and immovable

for all ages. It was with this object in view that he had turned 'Troilus and Cressida' into Latin verse. If we could believe the writers of the introductory pieces who celebrated his undertaking in complimentary lines, the end he aimed at had been accomplished. The name of Chaucer would no longer be limited by the narrow bounds of language and country. He would henceforth be read wherever men read poetry at all. What was lost to England, the world would find. The translation would become the original. Chaucer's fame might die in the changing tongue in which he wrote, but what he wrote would live forever in the Latin of Kinaston.

A certain kind of interest and value attaches to the commendatory poems that were prefixed to this version. They were fifteen in number. Nine of the contributors expressed their feelings in Latin, five in English, and one in both tongues. None of these writers can now be said to be known at all to fame, with the exception of William Cartwright. It is not, to be sure, in praises that appear in regulation verses of this sort, which convention would demand if friendship did not voluntarily pay, that we expect to find either literature of a very high grade or criticism of a very discriminating kind. We can indeed be certain that in some of these tributes to the memory of the dead author which accompanied the verses of the living one, the praise as well as the poetry was of a purely perfunctory character. But however valueless they may be in the matter of inspiration, they present a definite amount of evidence as to the sentiment about Chaucer then prevalent in the educated class. This evidence must, indeed, be taken with

due grains of allowance; for the main object of these commendatory pieces was to enforce the desirability and even the necessity of the Latin translation that had been undertaken. Yet in productions written to order, least of all would any one have outraged the general sentiment of his time by expressing views which it was not decorous to hold. An examination of these poems will therefore furnish us with a certain amount of information which may be deemed fairly trustworthy. It will show that even then the same variation of view existed which, as we shall find, Dryden subsequently pointed out with his usual clearness and sharpness. Two opinions were held in regard to Chaucer. By one class he was looked upon as the rude writer of a rude age. His language was obsolete, his diction was uncouth, his versification was rugged. By the other, he was regarded as a clear, graceful, and polished poet. Of these two classes more will be said later; all that is here essential is to indicate their existence then. From the tone of these introductory pieces, it is a natural inference that the supporters of the former view were largely in the majority. This is doubtless not conclusive testimony. Still, if they were not in the majority, no real reason could be given for undertaking the work which they had been called upon to commend. There was, however, a general agreement as to the existence of one unfortunate condition of things. The poetry of Chaucer lay almost neglected. Though he was not dead, he was out of fashion. Not every one was capable of reading his works; few presumed to understand them. For this there was but one remedy: that was to turn his writings into Latin.

Through this medium they would come to be known and read of all men.

Kinaston finished the translation of the three remaining books of 'Troilus and Cressida,' as also of Henryson's 'Testament of Cressida.' The completed version was prepared for publication, and received the imprimatur of the licenser; but for some reason it was never printed. He had written, moreover, a series of annotations upon the work both in English and in Latin. The manuscripts containing the two texts and commentaries were, and probably still are, in existence. They were for a time in the hands of Dr. Henry Aldrich, who, in 1689, became dean of Christ Church. From them Urry procured some notes to be transcribed for his edition. They then passed for a long while from public notice. In March, 1793, they were sold with the library of the Rev. J. H. Hindley, and purchased by Francis Godolphin Waldron, a player and play-writer connected with Drury Lane Theatre. In 1796 he printed a small pamphlet containing the first twelve stanzas of 'Troilus and Cressida,' with Kinaston's notes upon them and with some additional notes of his own. In the advertisement, he gave notice that the original poem with the English commentary would be first brought out; and if this should receive the patronage of the learned, it would be followed by the Latin version and its corresponding Latin commentary. But nothing further ever appeared. It is perhaps unfortunate that Kinaston's English commentary was never published. His few notes that were printed were valuable and accurate; and it is not absolutely impossible that he may

have had access to sources of information that have now disappeared.

To us of the present day it seems a deliciously absurd plan to make the works of Chaucer known to Englishmen by translating them into Latin. That it was absurd must be conceded. But it was far from being so absurd as it now seems. Especially was it far from seeming absurd to the men of that time. They had no conception whatever of the forces that give stability to language, or that regulate its development. The English tongue was in their eyes in a state of perpetual flux, and the writings of their own day would, in process of time, become unintelligible to the generations that succeeded. The only hope for him who sought for permanence of fame was to bring out his works in a language like the Latin, which underwent no change and had before it the assurance of perpetual existence. This feeling was doubtless more prevalent among scholars than among men of letters; but it was to be found, more or less, in both classes. It is well known that Bacon devoted no small part of his later life to translating, or rather to having translated, into Latin his English works. His avowed reason was that by this means only could he hope to have his productions handed down to later times. "It is true," he writes about 1623, "my labors are now most set to have those works which I had formerly published, as that of Advancement of Learning, that of Henry VII., that of the Essays being retractate and made more perfect, well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens which forsake me not. For these modern languages will at one time or other play

the bankrupt with books; and since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad, as God shall give me leave, to recover it with posterity." This is the view taken by the wisest man of his time; nor is the passage quoted the solitary instance in which it is expressed. In the dedication to the Duke of Buckingham of the edition of his 'Essays,' printed in 1625, he speaks with justifiable pride of the success with which the work had met, and with curious incapacity to comprehend the future of the tongue in which it was written. "I do conceive," he says of these productions, "that the Latin volume of them (being in the universal language) may last as long as books last."

Singular as such remarks may seem, coming from a man of Bacon's perspicacity, they are neither unexampled nor were they thought to be erroneous. Waller, in his famous lines on English verse, expressed the feeling that widely, and perhaps generally, prevailed. It was hopeless for him who wrote in a daily changing tongue to expect genuine immortality. Envy attacks him while he is living, and the language fails him when he is dead. Palaces built with ill-chosen stone soon crumble to decay. Herein lay the superiority of the classic tongues as a means for reaching the generations to come. Waller assures us that

> "Poets that lasting marble seek
> Must carve in Latin or in Greek;
> We write in sand, our language grows,
> And like the tide, our work o'erflows." [1]

[1] These lines were first included in the third edition of Waller's *Poems*, published in 1668, but they were probably written considerably earlier.

It is characteristic of Waller that he finds consolation for this unfortunate condition of things in the reflection that it still remains possible for the poet to gain by his verse the favor of the fair. The applause of after-ages may not be his. For that, however, ample amends is made by the praise of living beauty. It is enough for him if his lines have the brief term of existence that belongs to its fading charms. If by what he has written he has succeeded in securing the approbation of the beautiful, he has written to sufficient purpose. This, he tells us, is the reward that Chaucer received. The reference to him is noteworthy, because it exhibits the literary opinion of the seventeenth century upon the original harmony of his versification and the fate that had overtaken it. In this piece the early poet makes his first appearance as the chosen example of the havoc which time works with speech—a part he was afterwards destined to play constantly and conspicuously. According to Waller,

> "Chaucer his sense can only boast,
> The glory of his numbers lost;
> Years have defaced his matchless strain,
> And yet he did not live in vain."

With views of this kind widely prevalent, there need be little wonder that Latin was looked upon by many as the only secure medium through which they could hope to speak to posterity.

Time naturally has demonstrated in every experiment that has been tried the falsity of this belief. Kinaston's version, it is hardly necessary to say, did not realize the anticipations with which it was greeted. It neither ex-

tended the fame of Chaucer to foreign lands, nor did it build it up at home. The expectation, indeed, was as vain as the method was ridiculous. Even had both been otherwise, the time was unpropitious. The days that followed were not the days for increasing reputations that were merely literary. It is not during the stormy scenes of the civil war, or the political agitations that preceded the iron rule of Cromwell, that we are likely to find much mention made of a poet so remote in point of time and speech. Record of him there doubtless is, but it lurks in unsuspected places, in unread volumes, and will be brought to light only by chance or the combined labor of scholars. It is not till we enter upon the period of the Restoration that the name of the poet begins to occur outside of that vague and indefinite way in which authors are talked of whom it is reputable to mention, but not common to read. One of the earliest of these notices has fallen under the eyes of many; for it is to be found in the perpetually delightful pages of the only man who ever had the courage to keep an honest diary. It was on the 14th of June, 1663, that Pepys was at the residence of Sir William Penn, where a number of persons had assembled. "Among the rest," he writes, "Sir John Mennis brought many fine expressions of Chaucer, which he doats on mightily; and without doubt he is a fine poet."

Mennis was a controller of the navy. As a man of business he found little favor in the eyes of the Clerk of the Acts, who in one place speaks of him as having "gone to the fleet, like a doating fool, to do no good, but proclaim himself an ass." Still, the possession of

certain good qualities was accorded him by his critic. His conversation during that evening clearly made an impression upon the mind of Pepys. On the 10th of December of the same year the latter's diary records him as having visited his bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, and there turning over some twenty volumes to determine what ones of them he should purchase. 'Chaucer' was among the number, but he did not buy it upon that occasion. The temptation, however, must have been before his mind constantly. As in the case of every genuine book-hunter, it was merely a question of time when he should yield. Yield he did, though he mentions neither the date nor the circumstances. Still, on the 8th of July, 1664, we find him going to the binder's and directing "the doing of my Chaucer, though they were not full neat enough for me, but pretty well it is; and thence to the clasp-maker's to have it clasped and bossed." The diarist was not content with merely having it bound and clasped and bossed. He read it. Shortly after we find him with the noted arithmetician Cocker, who was engraving for him the tables upon his new sliding rules, and who tells him that he can cut best small things by artificial light. This is contrary, Pepys gravely adds, to Chaucer's words to the sun[1] that he should lend his light to them "that small seals grave." We gain also from the diary the impression that the early author was well known to the arithmetician. Pepys found "the fellow, by his discourse, very ingenuous; and among other things, a great admirer and well read in the English poets, and undertakes to judge of

[1] *Troilus and Cressida*, iii., 1462.

them all, and that not impertinently."[1] It is also to be remarked that it was at the instance of Pepys that Dryden produced his imitation of the character of the Parson in the general Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales.' It was doubtless as much to satisfy his friend as himself that he turned the parish priest of the fourteenth century into a non-juring divine of the seventeenth. For the apparent anachronism of imputing to the subjects of Henry IV. the acts and feelings of the subjects of William and Mary he has been taken severely to task by many critics who have not troubled themselves to become familiar with the precise nature and avowed object of the piece. Pepys assuredly did not grieve over the alteration. He told Dryden that he had truly obliged him, and that, in saying so, he was more in earnest than could be readily thought; "as verily hoping," he added, "from this your copy of one good parson to fancy some amends made me for the hourly offence I bear with from the sight of so many lewd originals."[2]

I have gone somewhat fully into these details because they set before our eyes a body of men of whose existence we should not have a conception were we to confine ourselves to the popular literature of the day. Not that by its authors the early poet is wholly unmentioned or unregarded. Sir John Mennis, just spoken of, is an illustration to the contrary. He is, indeed, a marked instance of the enthusiastic feeling entertained for Chaucer in quarters where it would be little expected. He was, to be sure, graduated at Oxford, and Anthony Wood tells us that, in his earlier years at least, he was "more ad-

[1] *Diary*, Aug. 11, 1664. [2] Malone's *Dryden*, vol. ii., p. 86.

dicted to the superficial parts of learning, poetry and oratory, wherein he excelled, than logic and philosophy." Still, his life, like that of most men of any prominence during that period, had been principally spent in active pursuits. He had been in the navy, and had reached the rank of rear admiral. At the time of which we are speaking he was holding an important official position. But he made a good deal of pretension to literature. In truth, he was so much a man of letters that Sir William Coventry swore to Pepys that his inefficiency was so conspicuous that he would henceforth be against a wit being employed in business. He has left us a work upon which this reputation was largely founded. In 1656 he had published, in conjunction with the Rev. Dr. James Smith, a collection of poems entitled the 'Muses' Recreation,' containing several pieces of poetic wit. It has had the distinction to be twice reprinted in modern times, though the general criticism can be fairly made of these pieces of poetic wit, as they were called, that in them the wit is of a very thin quality and the poetry of a far thinner. There is much in the work that is coarse, though its coarseness is rather of the kind that upsets the stomach than that which inflames the passions. Indeed, from the specimens of his own composition that Mennis has left behind, the critic of these days would be amply justified in stating Sir William Coventry's opinion in a reversed form, and declaring that he would be forever against a man of business attempting to set up for a wit.

Mennis may be regarded, however, as belonging to the period before the civil war in his tastes and sympathies, and as continuing to retain the feelings and views that

were prevalent in his youth. But we have a still more interesting example at that time of what had once been the accepted doctrine in Richard Braithwaite, who in a genuine sense had come down from the Elizabethans. In 1665 he brought out a little volume upon Chaucer. No name appears upon the title-page, but the author's initials occur in the dedication. The work purports to be "A Comment upon the Two Tales of our ancient, renowned, and ever-living poet, Sir Jeffray Chaucer, Knight, who for his rich fancy, pregnant invention, and present composure deserved the countenance of a prince and his laureat honor." The two tales are those of the Miller and the Wife of Bath. As, however, the prologue in each case was included, the number of lines subjected to examination was consequently doubled. This work, the author tells us, had been "begun and finished in his blooming years, when the heat of conceit more than the depth of intellect dictated to his pen." Of course he published it, as every one in those days professed to publish, only at the instance of friends, in this case at the instance of "sundry persons of quality" in particular. They urged him not to stop with the part he had completed. Their perusal of these comments, he tells us, "begot that influence over the clear and weighty judgments of the strictest and rigidest censors, as their high approvement of them induced their importunity to the author to go on with the rest, as he had successfully done with these two first; ingenuously protesting that they had not read any subject discoursing by way of illustration and running descant on such light but harmless fancies more handsomely couched nor modestly

shadowed." But Braithwaite was now nearing his eightieth year. He had no notion of spending the few days of his life that remained on any toys of this sort. Chaucer suffered no loss by his refusal. For anything so barren as his remarks upon these poems we should have to go to a great deal of the commentary that has been written on Shakspeare. He imparts no information which the reader could not and would not have discovered for himself. He not infrequently misunderstands the meaning of what he sets out to expound. His comments, moreover, are written in that wearisome artificial style of which some of the minor Elizabethans possessed the secret and fortunately failed to hand down the knowledge. There is a perpetual effort to say pointless things in a pointed way. The same thought is repeated again and again, with every possible variation of phrase. The petty antithesis of words, to which there is little corresponding antithesis of ideas, occurs constantly. The effect upon the mind, to use Braithwaite's own affected style, is naturally to arouse the feeling that the proffer of the writer is promising, but his performance mean; that when he speaketh least, he prevaileth most; that where he striveth hardest to make most mirth, his reader hath greatest cause to mourn; that while the desire to get through with his remarks continually groweth stronger, the ability to keep on with the perusal of them steadily becometh weaker; that, in fine, by how much the more the man who taketh up the work readeth it, by so much the more he is bored.

Braithwaite, indeed, is interesting to us only as a survival; but in that light he is very interesting. He holds

firmly to the traditions of the Elizabethan period. For him Chaucer still remains the incomparable poet, the English Homer, the famous, the ever-living. Could his life be renewed his "youthful genius could not bestow his endeavor on any author with more pleasure nor complacency to fancy than the illustrations of Chaucer." It is clear from examples like these that there were still men who reckoned the earliest of English poets as the greatest. It is equally clear that most of them were either old themselves or were more or less antiquarian in their tastes. That while this estimate had been once the prevalent feeling, it was so no longer, is evident from the work entitled 'Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum' which Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton, brought out in 1675. In this volume Chaucer is represented as having been generally reputed the prince and Coryphæus of English poets "till this age." The phrase in quotation marks is significant. Warton, it is to be added, professed to see in this work of Phillips many traces of Milton's hand. Since that writer's day the assertion has been repeated so often that it has come to be looked upon as an unquestionable fact. It is more than doubtful. The account, for instance, of Chaucer, brief as it is, is full of the grossest blunders. Had it been known to Milton, it could hardly have failed to be corrected out of existence. Still, there is no reason for denying that, in the critical estimates he gave, Phillips represented fairly enough the prevalent opinion of his time. His words imply that Chaucer had been superseded by later poets in the eyes of most. To corroborate that assertion there is plenty of other evidence.

The fact, however, that there had finally begun to be a demand for his writings which existing copies could not satisfy is made certain by the reprint in 1687 of Speght's edition of 1602. No publisher's name appears on the title-page; but the page containing an "advertisement to the reader" is signed J. H., who states that for some years past he has been greatly solicited by many learned and worthy gentlemen to reprint Chaucer's works, and that he has at length performed the obligation laid upon him long before. Even the mere republication of so extensive a work is conclusive proof of a genuine demand; for it is a large and well-printed folio. The expense must have been increased also by the employment of black-letter, which had somehow come to be considered as absolutely essential to the production of Chaucer's poetry. Kinaston's two books of 'Troilus and Cressida' had been so printed; and even the lines that had been quoted in Braithwaite's volume had been carefully put into that kind of type.

The details which have been given, but especially the publication of this folio of 1687, show the existence of a public to which the poet already appealed, and was beginning to appeal still more. They are essentially different in their nature from the incidental references to him, that are not infrequent. These latter are no proof whatever of acquaintance with his writings. They convey to us no assurance of anything beyond the mere fact that a poet bearing his name was known to have once existed. Yalden, to take one instance out of many, in his epistolary ode to Congreve, written in 1693, spoke of the "tuneful Chaucer." Mention of this sort

is purely perfunctory. It implies no knowledge; and if it did, it would carry no weight with the men of a generation to whom Yalden himself is tuneful no more. These references are apt to occur in pieces that set out to give a glance at the development of English poetry. In them, there are generally two characteristics worth noting. They show that much of Chaucer's work remained unknown even to those who to some extent read him. As a result of this ignorance, the point of view from which he was regarded had undergone a marked change of position. The first thing that strikes the reader of the poems of this period in which the early poet is introduced is the fact that it is to his comic vein that the attention is mainly and, indeed, almost exclusively directed. Of the mingled tenderness and strength which is found in his writings there is apparently no knowledge. Of the exquisite felicity that characterizes his expression constantly, of the dignity and grandeur that inspire it occasionally, the men of that day seem not to have had even a dream. It is his humor, his jollity, that is the one thing for which, in their eyes, he is worthy of regard. As it is put by the younger Evelyn in his poem on the 'Immortality of Poesie,' in which he records the principal English authors,

> "Old Chaucer shall for his facetious style
> Be read and praised by warlike Britons while
> The sea enriches and defends their isle."[1]

The second conclusion that can be drawn from these

[1] On page 90 of *Poems by Several* Collected by N. Tate, London, *Hands and on Several Occasions.* 1685.

references is, that to most men the interest in the poet had become an historic interest, and not a personal one. This, of course, was not true of all. There were those whose tributes to Chaucer's greatness were based upon knowledge of what he had written, as well as upon the fact that he had written at an early period. In a poem, for instance, of Sir Aston Cokayne, printed in 1658, one of the characters in it is advised to go to London, where

> "thou upon the sepulchre mayst look
> Of Chaucer, our true Ennius, whose old book
> Hath taught our nation so to poetize
> That English rhythms now may equalize;
> That we no more need envy at the strain
> Of Tiber, Tagus, or our neighbor Seine."[1]

Rarely, however, was even so much appreciation as this exhibited. The view that was generally taken was expressed by Chetwood in the lines commending Roscommon's 'Essay on Translated Verse.' In them Chaucer was celebrated as the one who "founded the Muses' empire on our soil." This is the light in which he almost invariably appeared to those who took any survey of English poetry as a whole. He was to none of them a living, breathing force, as he had been to Spenser in the century previous. The change of view is denoted by a change of epithet. He is no longer the English Homer; he is the English Ennius. He is no longer designated as learned; he is old. One illustration of the latter has just been given in the quotation taken from Evelyn. There is a more famous one in the lines

[1] 'A Remedy for Love,' in *A Chain of Golden Poems*, by Sir Aston Cokayne (London, 1658), p. 8.

in which Sir John Denham commemorated the death of Cowley in 1667, and his canonization among English poets. It is in this way his eulogy opened:

> "Old Chaucer, like the morning star,
> To us discovers day from far:
> His light those mists and clouds dissolved
> Which our dark nation long involved;
> But he descending to the shades,
> Darkness again the age invades."

As Chaucer was recognized as the founder of the line of English poets, he was always treated with respectful consideration by those who mentioned him, however little familiarity they might have with what he had written. Deference was felt to be due to his antiquity if not to his verse. To this regular approval there is but one exception. It is, however, a notable one. It is to be found in that extraordinary account of the greatest English poets which forms the subject of the rymed epistle which Addison addressed to Sacheverell. It was in this way that he spoke of Chaucer:

> "Long had our dull forefathers slept supine,
> Nor felt the raptures of the tuneful Nine;
> Till Chaucer first, a merry bard, arose,
> And many a story told in ryme and prose.
> But age has rusted what the poet writ,
> Worn out his language and obscured his wit:
> In vain he jests in his unpolished strain,
> And tries to make his readers laugh in vain."

After this it need not surprise us to find numerous comments of an equally sage character. Spenser, we are told, "in ancient tales amused a barbarous age,"

but he can no longer charm "the understanding age" that has succeeded. Sprat, and Roscommon, and Montague, and several other poetasters whom the world has been very well content to forget, are to be found in this list of the greatest English poets. They are mentioned in terms that would not have been out of place in speaking of men of the highest genius.

This epistle was first published in 1694, in the fourth of the series of poetical miscellanies that came out under the supervision of Dryden. It is itself dated the 3d of April. When he wrote it, Addison was consequently a little under twenty-two years of age. This fact may be pleaded in extenuation of this gratuitous exhibition of lack of knowledge and of taste. But while it may extenuate, it cannot justify it. Even at twenty-two a man is under no absolute compulsion to talk of matters of which he knows little or nothing. If we can trust Spence, Pope used to speak of this poem as a poor thing. He would have been justified in using an adjective much stronger. According to the same authority, he is represented as saying that Addison had told him that he had never read Spenser till fifteen years after he had produced this choice epistle. It is hardly safe to rely upon this report. The lines about Spenser imply a certain degree of familiarity with his writings which could not well have been gained without actual perusal. The assertion would not, however, have been a subject of doubt had it been made of the earlier poet. Nor is there any reason to believe that his stock of knowledge about the latter was ever increased. I cannot find that in all of Addison's writings, touching as

they constantly do upon matters connected with literature, that he ever referred to more than one production of Chaucer's; and that was to one which Chaucer did not write.[1]

[1] The spurious 'Remedy of Love,' found in the earlier editions, is the piece referred to; and the allusion to it occurs in the *Spectator*, No. 73. Mr. Matthew Arnold, indeed, says in his Introduction to Ward's *English Poets* (p. xxxvi.) that "Addison, wishing to praise Chaucer's numbers, compares them with Dryden's own." It is certainly a dangerous thing to assert a negative; but I venture to affirm that Addison nowhere makes any comparison of the sort.

## II.

THE lines quoted, a few pages previous, from Sir John Denham may be taken as representing the most favorable opinion that was usually held of Chaucer in the latter half of the seventeenth century. He is in them designated simply as the morning star of our literature. This is his distinction, and this alone. His work is a promise of the coming day rather than a realization of it. It is the unhappy fate, however, of morning stars, whether of the literary or of the natural heavens, to fall under the observation of very few eyes. The weight of evidence that at that time Chaucer was to most men of letters little more than a name is not impaired by the fact that in the midst of general ignorance or indifference individuals were still to be found who continued to look upon him as retaining the supremacy which for two centuries after his death had been unhesitatingly accorded him by the consent of all. Anthony Wood, for instance, in his great work, published 1691–2, still continues to call him the prince of English poets.[1] But Wood was an antiquary. It was doubtless felt by his contemporaries that it was his business as an antiquary to recollect and praise what the rest of the world was doing all in its power to forget. Still, the class to which this scholar

[1] *Athenæ Oxonienses*, under 'Thynne.'

belonged is not a class to be despised in the matter of influence; and it was far from being an inconspicuous part that it played in the revival that was now about to begin taking place in the poet's fame.

For the reputation of Chaucer was speedily to enter upon a new phase. A great renovation was to be accomplished for it; and the chief impulse towards this result came from the hands of a poet who stood in about the same relation to the literature of the latter half of the seventeenth century that the elder poet did to the latter half of the fourteenth. This man was Dryden. At the time he took up the task of reviving Chaucer he was, apparently, not in a position to exert much influence in the rehabilitation of any one's reputation. He had been deposed from the laureateship. The office he had held had, for the first time, been made contemptible by being conferred upon a writer distinguished by the soundness of his politics rather than by the excellence of his verse, and whose memory now survives almost entirely in the satire of the man he succeeded. But this was the least of Dryden's troubles. He was struggling with want, or what seemed to him want. He was oppressed with the double burden of illness and old age. A storm of calumny and invective was raging around him, partly on account of the immorality of his writings, but largely because of the change in his religion. The insults he had heaped upon his opponents when they were out of power were now returned in kind; and if their attacks did not equal his in vigor, they did in bitterness. An adherent of a beaten party, a communicant of a hated faith, himself deprived of place and pen-

sion, and no longer in favor with the dispensers of favor, he seemed little likely to do for others what he was unable to do for himself. In spite of this state of things, his literary dictatorship not only remained unshaken; it was even more firmly established than ever. Enemies and friends alike recognized his supremacy. Pope, not yet twelve years of age, contrived to see him, and to celebrate his greatness early came Addison, the rising literary hope of the Whigs. There was a solid justification for this continued influence of the veteran ruler. Dryden's mental powers never showed the slightest sign of decay. On the contrary, his taste and judgment kept steadily improving with the advance of years. He himself, indeed, speaks of one of his later productions as the wretched remainder of a sickly age, worn out with study and oppressed by fortune. Never was self-depreciation more unjustifiable. The work of his last twenty years down to the very close stands on a scale far higher than that accomplished at any time in the flush of youth or the vigor of early middle life.

There was likeness enough in the fortunes and opinions of the two writers to have of itself attracted the attention of the later poet to the earlier. These similarities are naturally far more striking to the observer of our day. Their lives covered the corresponding periods of their respective centuries. They certainly died, and possibly may have been born, in its corresponding years. They were both recognized by the common voice of contemporaries as having attained to the literary supremacy of their times. They were both connected with the court in various relations. They were both the favorites of

men who occupied high positions in the state, up to the very highest. They both held places in the customs' service. They both may have led free lives; they both certainly wrote free verses. They both seem in their later years to have experienced privation and sorrow, and both surely felt the pressure of poverty. Yet in neither did length of days or increase of infirmity bring any diminution of intellectual vigor; and the best work of both belongs to the latter portion of their lives. We know too little of the ancient poet to speak with confidence of closer analogies that may exist. This is especially true in the matter of their opinions. Yet even here there is a marked similarity between them in one respect. The writings of both are full of attacks upon the clergy; and if we could fully believe Chaucer's recantation to be genuine, we might be justified in saying that both sought relief from perplexities that wearied and doubts that disturbed without satisfying the heart in an unquestioning faith to the luxurious repose of which the minds of many are often tempted to fly.

Dryden, upon taking up the study of the earlier English authors, came to have a great admiration for Chaucer. At what period he first made acquaintance with his writings, we do not know positively. Still, in spite of Malone's doubt,[1] there is every reason to suppose that it was not a long while after his own accession to the laureateship in 1670. It is not necessary, indeed, to assume that he then became familiar with many, or that he ever became familiar with all, of the writings of the elder poet. Certain it is, however, that before the

[1] Malone's *Dryden*, vol. i., p. 318.

death of Charles he took occasion to pay a tribute of respect to Chaucer's power as a satirist. About 1680, Sir William Soames, of Suffolk, made a translation of Boileau's *Art Poétique*, which he submitted to Dryden for revision. The latter made many alterations in the version. In particular, he substituted in it English authors for the French ones of the original. In the course of the poem, Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal were specified as the representatives of the best manner shown in ancient satire; and the one writer in our tongue who exhibited that manner best was thus described:

> "Chaucer alone, fixed on this solid base,
> In his old style conserves a modern grace:
> Too happy if the freedom of his rhymes
> Offended not the method of our times."

This translation of Soames was published in 1683. It makes perfectly clear that before that period the attention of Dryden had been turned to the man whom, following a mistaken tradition, he called his predecessor in the laurel. About this time, also, it must have been that he conceived the idea of making the poet he admired known in a modern version to a generation which was ignorant of him, and, because it was ignorant, was disposed to deny him any great merit. From this project, however, he was dissuaded by one of his patrons, the Earl of Leicester, the elder brother of Algernon Sidney. That nobleman cherished a strong regard for Chaucer. He naturally believed that the beauty of his verse would be lost in any modernization. Out of deference to the opinion of one to whom he was under obligations, Dry-

den did not at that time carry out his plan. But in 1698 the earl died, and the poet thereafter felt himself at liberty to turn his thoughts to a scheme which he had never willingly abandoned. In the very last years of his life he took up the task with ardor. The result appeared in his volume of 'Fables, Ancient and Modern,' which was published in March, 1700, a few weeks before his death. This work contained, with much other matter, modernized versions of several of Chaucer's poems. To it was added, besides, a dissertation on his originals in the shape of a long preface. Dryden has been charged by Dr. Johnson with having written most of his critical essays only to recommend the work upon which he then happened to be employed.[1] There is every evidence, however, for believing that in this particular one, at any rate, he was giving utterance to sentiments not only really felt, but long matured. But whether the motive that dictated it was questionable or not, there can be no question as to the influence it exerted. Dryden's prose was always entertaining, and his criticism always commanded respect, even where it did not assent. The attractiveness of this essay, both in matter and manner, made it not merely the most interesting discussion of Chaucer's literary character and genius which up to the time had appeared, but has kept it from being surpassed in some respects by anything that has since been produced. The dissertation presents, moreover, something besides the critical estimate of the writer; it indirectly exhibits the critical estimate of the age. It furnishes direct evidence of the highest kind as to the opinions then generally

[1] *Rambler*, No. 93.

held in regard to the first great author of our literature. It will be found that it bears out entirely the inferences that have already been drawn from the words of the men who contributed their welcome to Kinaston's version of 'Troilus and Cressida.'

This it is now time to state fully. According to the testimony of this preface, there were then existing two classes entertaining views on the subject widely apart. By one of these the early poet was looked upon as a dry, old-fashioned wit not worth reviving. The reputation of Chaucer was a long way from having reached the stage where men who knew nothing about him felt obliged to pay respect to the opinions of those who knew. Dryden, indeed, tells us that he found some people offended because he had turned the tales he did into modern English. He mentioned no living persons as representatives of the feelings of this class, though to us Addison would be a particularly conspicuous one. From among the dead, however, he specified Cowley. This he did upon information given him by the Earl of Leicester. That poet had been induced by this nobleman to read Chaucer, but did not relish him, or, as Dryden puts it, had "no taste of him." Cowley is an author too little appreciated in the present age. Even at the very time of which we are speaking he had already begun to sink largely in reputation, though hardly more than thirty years had passed since his death. The process continued to go on rapidly in the century that followed, and has never been really arrested. The failure of the later author to appreciate the earlier was almost inevitable. He was of a school exactly opposite to that of which

Chaucer is a most distinguished representative. It was hardly to be expected that one of the most artificial writers of our tongue should enjoy one of the most natural. For Cowley, though possessing a genuine vein of poetry, was a man of conceits. He was addicted especially to grotesque comparisons and far-fetched allusions, dragged in not to illustrate his subject, but to exhibit his knowledge and wit. When to the difference of character was added the difficulty of language, far greater then than now, it is not surprising that Cowley should have felt for Chaucer a distaste which, with a certain degree of injustice, most men at the present time feel for Cowley himself.

On the other hand, the Earl of Leicester represented, as has been said before, a class so ardently attached to the early poet that the men who belonged to it viewed with repugnance any attempt to put his writings in a modern dress. They thought a certain veneration was due to his language, and that it was little less than profanation to alter it in the slightest degree. Moreover, they believed that something of his good sense would necessarily disappear in the transfusion to a later form, and that much of the beauty of his thoughts would be lost in the new habits in which they were clothed. This was, in truth, a feeling that had previously influenced Kinaston. He could, he tells us, have changed the obsolete phrases and expressions of his original into the English of his own age, and fitted it for the comprehension of readers, at far less expense of time and trouble than was required to turn it into Latin ryme. But in his eyes it would have been, as he expressed it, an inexpiable sin against the manes

of Chaucer to have altered the least word in writings which were worthy to remain sacred and untouched forever. By men of this class there is no doubt that Dryden's proceedings were regarded with undisguised dislike. It was in 1706, only a few years after his modernizations had come out, that a poem was published entitled 'Woodstock Park.' It has a special interest on account of the vigor with which it gives expression to this feeling of displeasure. Its author was William Harrison, a fellow of New College, Oxford, and an intimate friend of Swift. In this production he bestowed the highest praise upon Chaucer's genius. He spoke in particular of his excellence in description, where poetry had invaded the art of the painter. Then he proceeded to set forth his opinion of the modern versions in these words:

> "This Dryden saw, and with his wonted fate
> (Rich in himself) endeavored to translate:
> Took wondrous pains to do the author wrong,
> And set to modern tune his ancient song.
> Cadence and sound which we so prize and use
> Ill suit the majesty of Chaucer's muse:
> His language only can his thoughts express;
> Old honest Clytus scorns a Persian dress."

From the point of view of our own time, especially from that of the last twenty-five years, the class represented by Kinaston, Leicester, and Harrison would be regarded as entirely in the right. Yet as respects the age in which he himself flourished, it is a question if Dryden's conclusion as to the desirability of a paraphrase was not the correct one. He was addressing the

men of a generation to the vast majority of whom Chaucer was unknown. Even those who had any acquaintance with him at all knew him only in editions in which the carelessness of copyists, the blunders of printers, and the ignorance of editors had combined sometimes to obscure his sense, but more often to impair and occasionally to destroy the beauty of his versification. Those who had the desire did not then have the means of pursuing the study of his language. The natural obscurity which, in that respect, time had brought about was to most readers rendered apparently several shades deeper by printing his writings in the black-letter type which had long been abandoned in the case of every other author, and, in consequence, came at last to be considered by many as essential to the adequate and accurate representation of the early poet's ideas.

As a matter of fact, indeed, the two classes mentioned by Dryden have lasted down to our own time. It is only the numbers and influence of the two that have been reversed. There are those of the present day who know as little of Chaucer and condemn him as glibly, though not so loudly, as the most ignorant pretenders to taste of the latter half of the seventeenth century. But this critical estimate now is dimly conscious that it is based wholly upon ignorance. It is clearly suspicious that the expression of it will be looked upon as indicative of obtuseness rather than of superior insight. It is therefore ordinarily not disposed to avow its lack of appreciation, and very rarely to plume itself upon it. For there is at present, what there was not even a hundred years ago, a large and steadily increasing body of culti-

vated readers to whom Chaucer's language presents no difficulties, to whom the melody of his verse is manifest, and by whom the greatness of his genius is both recognized and understood. If no such influential body existed a century ago, still less did it exist in the generation that Dryden addressed. He himself felt that in much which he said he was taking extreme ground. He assures us that for preferring Chaucer to Ovid he expected to be thought little less than mad by the vulgar judges who, in his estimate, constitute nine parts in ten of all nations. As by his very comparison the vulgar judges of whom he spake must have been largely made up of the graduates of the universities, it can be seen that he did not reckon upon much support for his opinions from the educated class. It is a striking illustration of Dryden's genuine critical judgment that he could recognize so plainly Chaucer's power, and find so many things to admire, in spite not merely of the general sentiment of his time, but also of the wretched form in which the poet's works appeared, and of his own ignorance of a great deal that is now well known to the least keen-sighted of us all.

For no man, however great, can be wholly superior to his age, and in matters of knowledge is little likely to be much above it. Dryden's remarks upon Chaucer are very convincing evidence both of his ignorance and of his insight. They are singularly distinguished by their want of knowledge of the poet and by their appreciation of his poetry. He is full of misstatements of fact. He not merely attributes to Chaucer the spurious 'Plowman's Tale'—which is an error of his time, and not spe-

cifically of himself—but he seems to confuse it with Langland's 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' which is purely a blunder of his own. In the passage quoted from the version of Boileau's 'Art of Poetry' we have seen that twenty years before he had referred to the freedom of Chaucer's rymes—by which he meant the license of his versification—as something offensive to the modern method. This view he now reinforced more fully. His remarks upon his metre gave the weight of his authority to the opinion then generally accepted that the early poet was in matter of form a rude, unpolished writer. He was characterized by Dryden as a rough diamond. His words, his admirer declared, must be given up as a post not to be defended, because he understood not the modern science of fortification. His lines often lacked the proper number of syllables. His verse, as a necessary consequence, was frequently deficient in harmony. It is almost needless to add that these assertions were accompanied with the usual declaration made during the hundred years following the Restoration, that it was to Waller and Denham that English verse owed its perfection and final polish; that these two men, who rose no exalted height above the grade of poetasters, had a skill in versification far greater than all the mighty masters who had gone before; and that, indeed, our numbers were in their nonage till these pygmies came. These were the crudities and absurdities of the criticism of the age; and though we may regret that Dryden was not superior to them, we can hardly be surprised at it.

In truth, it would have been more than strange had Dryden taken any other ground than he did. Harri-

son's censure of his modernizations shows that the most thorough-going of the admirers of Chaucer did not deny the rudeness of that poet's versification. They simply contended that this rudeness was preferable to the polish which another age might seek to bestow; though in the concession the feeling can be detected that in the deference then paid to cadence and sound there was a sort of literary effeminacy which did not contrast favorably with the manliness and vigor of the earlier time. By all these advocates of the poet the words were practically given up, to use Dryden's phrase, as a post not to be defended. In place of the praise usually bestowed upon diction in the case of other writers, stress was laid upon the assumed higher qualities of matter and invention. Peacham, who, in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, furnished for his contemporaries that frequently printed code of manners entitled 'The Complete Gentleman,' authoritatively announced to that ideal personage that Chaucer must be accounted among the best of the English books in his library. Yet even at that time he recognized the obsolescence of his language, if not its obsoleteness. For it he presented the usual substitutes. "Although," he wrote, "the style for the antiquity may distaste you, yet as under a bitter and rough rind there lieth a delicate kernel of conceit and sweet invention." Braithwaite also, at the end of his Comment, represents himself as in this way crushing a pestilent critic who had interposed a remark to the effect that he could allow well of Chaucer if his language were better. "Whereto," he said, "the author of these Commentaries returned him this answer: 'Sir, it appears you prefer speech before

the head-piece; language before invention; whereas weight of judgment has ever given invention priority before language. And not to leave you dissatisfied, as the time wherein these tales were writ rendered him incapable of the one, so his pregnancy of fancy approved him incomparable for the other.' Which answer stilled this censor, and justified the author; leaving New-holme to attest his deserts; his works to perpetuate his honor."

This particular censor may have been stilled by this argument; but it was not of a kind to make the majority of men dumb. Naturally the view expressed was not the one ordinarily taken. It was assuredly one that could not be successfully defended. The alliance between matter and expression in poetry is too close for either to be considered independently of the other. If Chaucer's diction cannot stand on its own merits, it will never be propped up permanently by the eulogiums paid to his ideas and invention. As his admirers were apparently compelled to admit that his language was lacking in beauty and melody, the uncouthness of his verse came more and more to be assumed as something about which there was not the slightest question. The charge of crudeness and inelegance was the one regularly made. It was increasingly echoed and re-echoed through the century that followed. There is scarcely an extended reference to Chaucer which does not either assert it or imply it. The glory of his numbers had been lost, according to Waller, through the changes constantly going on in the language. But the eighteenth century was not disposed to concede that any glory had belonged to his numbers in the first place. The best that

could be said of him was that he, a rude man living in a rude age, had possessed a native strength which justified later times in bestowing upon him the patronage of a guarded approval. We who have learned to recognize in him one of the greatest, if not the greatest master in our tongue of melodious versification, can hardly afford to sneer at the misconceptions of the preceding century, when our own, with ample facilities for arriving at the truth, has largely contented itself with repeating, and often in exaggerated phrase, the blunders of the past.

Still, though Dryden's authority gave vitality to a prevalent error on this point, his criticism was on the whole of great and enduring benefit to Chaucer's reputation. It did not, to be sure, bring him at the time into vogue. That was the work of a later generation. But it did bring him, as regards the general public of educated men, into that sort of estimation in which many authors exist who are spoken well of by everybody, though read by few or none. From this period on, moreover, there was a slow but steadily increasing revival of interest in the early poet. It did not at first manifest itself to any great degree in genuine study. Yet it is plain that his writings were more or less familiar to nearly all the prominent men of letters of the former half of the eighteenth century. This acquaintance, however, did not by any means always involve appreciation. Respect of a peculiar kind was paid to his memory. For, after a fashion, Chaucer for a while, curiously enough, became a fashion. Two methods of showing him honor sprang into existence. One was the composition of works written in his manner, or in

his supposed manner. The other was the carrying out and extending to his remaining works the process of modernization which had been begun by Dryden. These were both illegitimate methods of spreading his reputation. The result, so far as there was any result, was to make him notorious rather than known. They, doubtless, carried his name where otherwise it would not have been heard of; but they gave an entirely false conception of his genius. The history of the former of these methods, as on the whole less influential, will first be related.

It would be untrue to speak of the practice of imitation as due to Dryden's influence, so far as its origin was concerned. The revival of interest in our earlier writers began to show itself in the closing years of the century in which he flourished. But the movement in this direction did not owe its first impulse to him or to any one man. Sufficient notice has never been taken of it in the history of literature. There is, indeed, an ignorance at the present time of the attitude of the mind of the eighteenth century towards the past, which perpetually betrays us into the grossest errors. Much stress, for illustration, is constantly laid upon Goldsmith's remark that he had never heard of Drayton. It is often quoted as if his ignorance were proof of general ignorance. Nothing could well be farther from the truth. It is specially unfair to any period to test its knowledge or appreciation of any subject or person from the chance sayings of a man of genius, whose present popularity gives his assertions a weight which they were far from possessing in his own day. Goldsmith had as

little acquaintance as the men who quote him with the fact that what can be called the first collected edition of Drayton's works was published only a few years before he expressed himself as he did. His ignorance, indeed, was distributed over a wide variety of subjects, and he is no more a competent witness to the knowledge of our past literature possessed by the eighteenth century than he is to its knowledge of natural history. No one, to be sure, will pretend that there existed then much familiarity with any of our early writers. But the ignorance was a relative, and not an absolute, one. The study of them was moving back slowly, but it moved. In process of time it would have reached Chaucer had Dryden never written a word. All that in justice can be ascribed to him is that he gave a powerful impulse to a revolution that was destined under any circumstances to run its course. Spenser, as nearer in time and language, was the first to be struck by this wave; and there are probably few persons outside of professed students of English literature who have any conception of the number of productions written in avowed imitation of that poet's manner during the whole of the eighteenth century. Moreover, if allusions to the 'Fairy Queen,' in books and periodicals, can be taken as a test of acquaintance with the work itself, there is every reason to believe that it was read far more then than now.

The consideration of these imitations of Spenser is out of place here. They were far greater in number than those of Chaucer. They were also more successful. The worst of them had a certain claim to likeness,

which is something that can rarely be said of the best of the efforts to reproduce the style and language of the earlier poet. Still, these latter were the first to be attempted. They had their origin in the decay of knowledge. Men began to adopt and parade Chaucer's words as soon as they had ceased to understand them. The result was that a style of writing, which never had any existence anywhere, was taken as the model to which all [redacted]rs archaically inclined were expected to con-for[redacted]arliest of these efforts to represent the mann[redacted]e poet with which I am acquainted was the production of one of the scholars with whose attendant encomiums Kinaston's Latin translation of 'Troilus and Cressida' was ushered into the world. His name was Francis James, and he signed himself as bachelor of arts of New College, Oxford. His piece was a short one of fourteen lines. Still, he contrived to pack into this brief composition a goodly number of the less known and less easily understood of the words and phrases which are to be found in the more than thirty thousand lines of the poet he imitated. It is not the solitary instance of this scholar's archaic predilections of which Chaucer was the victim. To a translation of the 'Loves of Clitophon and Leucippus,' from the Greek of Achilles Tatius, which was published in 1638, he prefixed a copy of commendatory verses. They consisted of double the number of lines that were found in the piece that has just been mentioned. They were built, however, upon the same plan, and exhibited the same characteristics. James was altogether more Chaucerian than Chaucer himself. As large a collection as

possible of peculiarities of expression, most remote from modern speech, had been carefully culled out, and brought together in the compass of these few lines. The reader who got his conception of fourteenth-century English from these imitations would find it a matter of some little difficulty to understand how nineteenth-century English could ever have been developed out of a language of this sort.

There is, indeed, in the first part of the 'Ret[redacted]om Parnassus,' which, though not published [redacted]was produced at the end of the sixteenth centu[redacted]called imitation of Chaucer's style.[1] It is almost perfectly correct, there being but one error of inflection in it, and this consists merely in incorrectly attributing to the poet a grammatical form he would not ordinarily have used, though in itself it is not incorrect.[2] But this accuracy was easily secured. The passage was brief, consisting but of three seven-line stanzas. Moreover, nearly all the lines of it are taken wholly, or in part, from 'Troilus and Cressida.' Its existence, therefore, can hardly be held to conflict with the previous statement that it was Francis James with whom this series of imitations began. It was, perhaps, his example that inspired another effort of a somewhat similar kind. Cartwright has been already mentioned as the only one of the poetical commenders of Kinaston's attempt whose name can be said to survive in literary history. Even in the list of the illustrious obscure with whom he must be classed he does not hold a prominent place. Still, by his contemporaries he was looked upon as remarkable both for

[1] In act iv., scene i.

[2] *Ybears*, ryming with the plural *tears*.

his learning and his parts, and his early death was deeply deplored. His imitation of Chaucer's language is, therefore, a suggestive example of the ignorance that had come to prevail about it even among those who were theoretically familiar with his writings. In his commendatory lines Cartwright had intimated that the ancient poet, who had hitherto been dumb to strangers and even to his own countrymen, was now, through the medium of Kinaston's translation, to speak plainly to all. He speedily took occasion to furnish satisfactory evidence that there was one person certainly to whom he had not spoken with much distinctness. Some time before his death, which took place in 1643, one of his plays, entitled 'The Ordinary,' was brought out. It was an imitation of Ben Jonson's 'Alchemist.' All the characters in it who are not scoundrels are fools, and many of them are both. It is to be remarked, also, that the worst of the crew, after the exposure of their villainies, resolve to take refuge in the congenial soil of New England, where no good works are allowed, and faith alone is demanded. An extremely shallow-brained personage in the play is an antiquary named Moth. He goes about uttering speeches made up almost entirely by joining together detached phrases and lines from Chaucer's writings. It is, as might be expected, a sort of jargon that never came actually from any mortal lips. But the most surprising thing connected with it is the absolute ignorance exhibited by its deviser of the most common words used by the poet. The impossible grammar could be forgiven if any possible sense could be attached to what is said. Gross as are

the failures of some of the eighteenth-century imitators of Chaucer's style, it must be conceded that Cartwright surpassed them all in the production of a phraseology which would have been as incomprehensible to a man of the fourteenth century as it is to one of the nineteenth.

The 'Musarum Deliciæ,' to which attention has previously been called, contained two satiric pieces in imitation of Chaucer's style. Though no name is attached to them, they were in all probability the composition of Sir John Mennis. Their merit is of a purely negative character. The language, though not absolutely, was comparatively, free from mistakes; but there was nothing in what was said to arouse the slightest interest. The same can be said of an imitation of the tale of Sir Thopas which appeared in a collection of political pieces entitled 'Choice Drollery.' This, like the preceding, came out in 1656. Apparently much more important than either of these was a little work which appeared in 1672, entitled 'Chaucer's Ghost, or a Piece of Antiquity containing twelve Pleasant Fables of Ovid penned after the ancient manner of writing in England.' The poems were accompanied with a story in prose called the 'Pleasant History of Prince Corniger and his Champion Sir Crucifrag.' The work was a peculiar one. Its title gave the impression that it had been designedly composed in imitation of Chaucer's style. But it takes the very briefest of readings to convince even a superficial student of fourteenth-century literature that it is not the ghost of that poet who has made his appearance, but the ghost of Gower. His mechanical manner, his monotonous movement, are both there. An examination of the pieces estab-

lishes the further fact that it is not the ghost of Gower that has been brought upon the stage, but the real Gower himself. The twelve poems found in this little volume are taken bodily from the 'Confessio Amantis,' with few and slight modernizations, but enough to render them easily intelligible. But there is not a hint in the preface, or anywhere in the work itself, of the real source. Chaucer could never have been plagiarized in this way without detection. Gower in that age, and, for that matter, in most ages, could be plundered with impunity by any one who deemed him worth plundering at all.

The existence of the pieces that have been mentioned is, of course, proof positive that it was not to anything said by Dryden that the practice of composing imitations of Chaucer owed its origin. Still, it was indirectly to him that the extension of the practice was mainly due. His essay in praise of the poet was speedily followed by an outburst of productions of this sort. Nor did it cease very soon. For more than a half-century after Dryden's death it became the fashion to offer a tribute of respect to Chaucer in the questionable shape of spurious imitation. To write in the style of Spenser—which in the eighteenth century meant to adopt the Spenserian stanza, flavored with a little bad grammar and the occasional insertion of an obsolete word—was not a task of extreme difficulty. Its practice in some instances was even attended with a moderate degree of success. For when Spenser is once stripped of his strange spelling, his language is hardly more difficult to us in any respect than it was to the men of his own time, while we have facili-

ties far greater than they possessed for gaining complete comprehension of his archaic words and spurious coinages.

The case is altogether different with Chaucer. His speech is the speech of his age. It is therefore to be acquired by him who is willing to put forth the requisite amount of exertion. But his manner is one supremely difficult to catch, on account of its combination of simplicity and naturalness with never-failing dignity. The difficulty is still further increased by the presence in his satire of a peculiar archness and delicacy that almost eludes analysis, and by the ease and spontaneity of his expression, which never, under any stress, degenerates into slovenliness. He is, in consequence, one of the hardest of poets to imitate successfully. In this respect he stands next to Shakspeare, who cannot be successfully imitated at all. Not thus, however, thought the men of the early part of the eighteenth century. To produce a poem after the pleasant manner, as the phrase ran, of Geoffrey Chaucer became the correct thing for the writers of that age to attempt. The list of those who concerned themselves in these efforts includes the names of some eminent poets, besides a host of representatives from the noble army of poetasters. Pope, Prior, and Gay can be mentioned among those who tried their fortune in this literary tournament. But besides the essays of these, and of men like these, there appear in the periodicals and poetical collections and miscellanies of the eighteenth century compositions of unknown authors, or of authors who have had time to become now unknown, which purport to be written in Chaucer's

manner. They are nearly all of them in a so-called facetious strain, of which it is extremely difficult at present to detect the facetiousness. They were sometimes, and perhaps always, printed in black-letter, in accordance with that curious superstition of which we have already had occasion to take notice several times, and which we shall meet more than once again. For instance, Prior's imitative poems called 'Susanna and the Two Elders' and 'Erle Robert's Mice' were brought out in this type on their original publication in 1712.

These imitations are clearly evidence that in a certain way a good deal of attention was paid to the original. But they do not show that it was understood or appreciated. If anything, they show the reverse. For the attempt to reproduce the style and diction of Chaucer was remarkable for nothing so much as for the completeness of its failure. It is plain from these eighteenth-century imitations that three things were held to be desirable in any production which set out to represent adequately the early poet's manner. The receipt for its composition was, in truth, a very simple one. The story must be obscene, the language must be ungrammatical, and the verse must be rugged. The three characteristics were successfully blended, though it would be unjust to say that the first was insisted upon unqualifiedly. There are a number of these pieces, though usually very short ones, which are remarkable for the absence of impurity. Still, the lack of it was generally felt to be showing a certain want of faithfulness to the so-called merry spirit of the original. Moreover, the nastiness which characterizes these productions is genu-

ine eighteenth-century nastiness—a dragging-in of coarse images and ideas for their own sake, a fondness for filth as filth. Chaucer, in the tales with which most fault has been found by moralists, certainly does not go out of his way to avoid obscenity. Still, he does not tell his story for the sake of the sin. The sin is recounted because it happens to be a necessary ingredient in what is a good story. In the eighteenth-century imitations, however, the sin was not an accident of the tale, or an incident in it; it was the thing alone for which the tale was told. Fortunately, the depravity of these pieces was, in nearly all cases, effectually counteracted by their dulness.

In the matter of metre and language, the deviations from the original were even more marked. Chaucer's lines were understood to lack the proper number of words or syllables, to have the words they possessed accented in the most outlandish ways, and, in short, to combine all the qualities that suffice to render verse rough and unharmonious. These peculiarities it was necessary to reproduce. In this respect the work was done faithfully. But the greatest failure of all was in the language. The producers of these imitations seemed to be largely under the belief that the farther they could get from the correct usage of their own age, the nearer they were to the usage of the poet's age. Their knowledge was very much upon the level of that occupied now by the dabblers in the spelling of 'ye olden time,' as they term it, who fancy that they reproduce the orthography of the past by doubling consonants at random and adding a final *e* to every word which has not one already. In this respect the eighteenth-century imitations

show generally a decided falling-off of knowledge as compared with those of the seventeenth, with the one exception of Cartwright's. Those of the latter which have fallen under my own observation exhibit, it is true, certain mistakes in the matter of language arising from a failure to comprehend what was peculiar to the grammar of the fourteenth century. They sin, too, by their excess in the employment of forms comparatively unusual. Their work was, in fine, the work of men who wholly admired, but understood only imperfectly. So much as this can scarcely be said of their successors in the century that followed. Theirs was the work of men who admired conventionally, and did not understand at all. Common English written in an uncommon way, filled with strange words, and words in strange senses, and disfigured by grammar which would have puzzled the grammarians of any epoch, was their conception of what constituted Old English.

The result, from a linguistic point of view, was more striking than satisfactory. A failure to catch the spirit of Chaucer's writing, and also the melody of his versification, could be assumed in advance. Yet it did not seem unreasonable to expect that a distant approach to the words and grammar of his period might be made by some few of those who set out to reproduce what was termed the antique phrase of the original. Results of this kind were rarely obtained, even remotely. The language in which most of these imitations were couched is a language that has never been spoken by anybody since the English tongue began to have an existence of its own. It is easy to detect the blunders that were

made, and usually to see how they happened to be made. Yet peculiar words are occasionally found to which the reader can attach no definite meaning, for there is nothing in the words themselves, or in the context, to suggest what they could have been intended to mean. Two genuine Chaucerian terms there are, indeed, constantly employed. These are the adverbs *ne* and *eke*. They were apparently the only words of which these imitators had grasped the full significance, and in consequence they are scattered about the lines in profusion. Yet even of them the knowledge was not a universal knowledge. Prior, for instance, used the adverb *ne* in the sense of the adjective *no*.

Still, it was not in the vocabulary, but in the grammar, that the most startling contributions were made to the language. One illustration, easy of comprehension, will suffice to make the point plain. In Chaucer the plural of the present tense of the verb ended in *en*, if it had the full termination; but this termination was never used by him in the singular of this tense, or by any other author in any dialect of our tongue who wrote English as it is, and not as it has been supposed to be. Thus it follows that in the fourteenth century one could say *we*, or *ye*, or *they loven;* but it would have been as impossible then to say *I*, or *thou*, or *he loven* as it is now. This distinction it does not require any prolonged study of the works of the poet to observe. Yet it was evidently something that had never attracted the attention of his imitators. The forms which he would not and could not have used were the very forms which they used by preference. This was a species of blun-

der that was early made. It can be found, as we have already seen, in a production that goes so far back as the 'Court of Love.'[1] But it is the writers of the eighteenth century who display most signally the disposition to resort to this particular spurious form. Their fondness for the singular in *en* amounted almost to a morbid craving. Gay, for instance, has in a poem of about seventy lines such phrases as 'It maken doleful song,' 'There spreaden a rumour,' and 'Fear createn,' and numerous other specimens of this peculiar grammatical concord.[2] "If in mine quest thou falsen me," says Fenton in his "tale devised in the pleasant manner of gentle Geoffrey Chaucer." "Ne hopen I his permagall to see," exclaims William Thompson in the inscription he wrote entitled 'In Chaucer's Boure.' Spenser had previously failed, to some extent, to understand the poet he admired and studied. In these imitations we find the sort of work that would naturally be made by men who failed even to understand Spenser.

The most successful of these pieces—if successful be a term properly applied to what in no case succeeded—was the work of the Reverend Thomas Warton, for ten years professor of poetry at Oxford, but better known now as the father of two more eminent sons. He had not the genius to rise, even remotely, to the level of his great original; but the scholar's habit of accuracy saved him from the gross blunders into which mere men of letters fell heedlessly. His production, in consequence, has one distinguishing advantage over that of his rivals

[1] See vol. i., pp. 502 and 503.

[2] "An Answer to the Sompner's Prologue in Chaucer," printed anonymously in Lintot's *Miscellany*, entitled *Poems on Several Occasions* (1717), p. 147.

in this species of composition. It is written in the English language. Moreover, he had the sagacity to select for his experiment a passage which lends itself with comparative ease to imitation. This was the characterization of the birds that is found in the 'Parliament of Fowls.' It was after the fashion set by Chaucer in that poem that Warton paraphrased the verses in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, which laid down the law in regard to the winged animals that the Jews were to hold unclean.[1] As his was perhaps the best of these pieces, what is probably on the whole the worst was the composition of the most pretentious poetical prig that the eighteenth century produced. This was Mason, who still lingers in literary history, after a vicarious fashion, as the friend of Gray. He was himself, however, not actually devoid of poetical ability. At least at one period of his life spitefulness gave a vigor to his pen which inspiration was never able to impart, and he produced, as a result, some abusive and therefore still readable satires. The imitation to which reference has been made consists of nothing but a single passage in a longer poem. Still, in a certain way, it is the most interesting specimen of these spurious reproductions of the past. It is brief, and it is comprehensive. It combines in the compass of some two dozen lines about all the peculiarities of halting verse, bad grammar, uncouth words, and impossible inflections which constituted what the eighteenth century chose to consider the antique diction of Chaucer.

[1] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by the Rev. Thomas Warton (1748), p. 30.

The poem of which this imitation was a part was occasioned by the death of Pope. That event took place in 1744. Some time after, Mason wrote a monody upon the dead poet which was published in 1747. It bore the title of 'Musæus,' and was a particularly feeble echo of the 'Lycidas' of Milton. The plan of that pastoral it followed pretty closely. Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton were represented as coming to mourn the inevitable loss of him who was about to die. In the passages in which they were introduced as giving expression to their sorrow, Mason strove to reproduce their respective styles, as he did also that of Pope himself. It is, everywhere, a mere mechanical imitation from which the life is effectually excluded. Poor as it was in the case of the later poets, it was in the representation of the manner of the earliest that the falsetto note which runs through all of Mason's work exhibits itself in its fullest and harshest form. It is in the following artless strains, as he would have considered and called them, that Chaucer is represented as chanting his contribution to the general wail of woe:

"First, sent from Cam's fair banks, like Palmer old,
Came Tityrus slow, with head all silvered o'er,
And in his hand an oaken crook he bore,
And thus in antique guise short talk did hold:
'Grete clerk of Fame'is house, whose excellence
'Maie wele befitt thilk place of eminence,
'Mickle of wele betide thy houres last,
'For mich godè wirke to me don and past.
'For syn the days whereas my lyre ben strongen,
'And deftly many a mery laie I songen,

'Old Time, which alle things don maliciously
'Gnawen with rusty tooth continually,
'Gnattrid my lines, that they all cancrid ben,
'Till at the last thou smoothen 'hem hast again:
'Sithence full semely gliden my rimes rude,
'As, (if fitteth thilk similitude)
'Whannè shallow brook yrenneth hobling on,
'Ovir rough stones it makith full rough song:
'But, them stones removen, this lite rivere
'Stealith forth by, making plesaunt murmere:
'So my sely rymes, whoso may them note,
'Thou makist everichone to ren right sote:
'And in thy verse entunist so fetisely,
'That men sayen I make trewe melody,
'And speaken every dele to myne honoure.
'Mich wele, grete clerk, betide thy parting houre.'"

He is then represented as ceasing his "homely ryme" and making place for Spenser.

No student of Chaucer needs to be told that language is hardly contemptuous enough to set forth satisfactorily the contemptible character of this imitation. It is an outrage both upon the memory of the poet and of the speech in which he wrote. Yet there is no question that it was generally thought at the time to be a successful reproduction of the diction of Chaucer. Mason was hailed by some as the coming poet upon the strength of this one production. Even as late as 1806 Bowles in his edition of Pope[1] styled it "the exquisite Musæus." That this cuckoo song could so long have been mistaken for the note of a nightingale is one of those perversities of criticism which leave the reader in doubt whether

[1] Vol. i., p. cxviii.

there is in reality anything that can be deemed even remotely a standard of taste. The affirmative view can only be maintained in this case upon the ground that knowledge is essential to any proper literary judgment, and that then knowledge of our early speech did not exist. The passage which purported to represent Chaucer's style found censurers, it is true; but it was its propriety that was called in question, not its accuracy. A slight controversy on this very point was carried on in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1749. A correspondent who signed himself C. B., and evidently a pronounced advocate of the process of modernization then going on, took Mason seriously to task for the raiment in which he had clothed his monody. Do we read Chaucer or Spenser, he asked, for their language or for their sentiments? Most assuredly for their sentiments, was his reply to his own question. He then went on to pay a tribute to Pope for the modernizations he had made. "Who," he wrote, "can read those embellished tales of Chaucer, and the no less improved satires of Dr. Donne, without admiring the piety as well as poetry of him who has rescued from oblivion what must else have perished in the ruins of an antiquated style, and given them immortality by a language which we trust will never die?" C. B. was not to have it all his own way, however. B. C., a rival and reversed representative of the alphabet, attacked speedily his position. The communication was evidently inspired by Mason, and perhaps written by him. It had nothing but contempt for the opposing view. This it expressed with all the forcible feebleness of italicized words. "I own," he wrote, "till this in-

stant I was thoughtless enough to admire with the multitude the *dress* of *Mr. Mason's plan* as a piece of the most delicate propriety; and really imagined that Chaucer and Spenser made a more natural and easy figure in the *cloathes* they were used to wear, than any he could have supplied them with of the modern cut." It would be a hard task to decide now which of these two disputants had shallower knowledge of the points in controversy. One's respect for Tyrwhitt constantly rises the more fully he gets an insight into the ideas usually prevalent in the eighteenth century in regard to the English language in general and to that of Chaucer in particular.

I do not mean to give the impression that these imitations were exceedingly numerous. Indeed, the most satisfactory thing about them is their fewness. Nor would it be just to say that there was universal confidence in their correctness, or that suspicion of their spurious character could not be found even among those who made little pretension to know accurately. As familiarity with the authors of the past steadily though slowly increased, this lurking distrust naturally became bolder. It might not dare to assert itself with positiveness; but it made its existence felt. Armstrong, for illustration, in his poem on 'Taste,' which was first published in May, 1753, took occasion to satirize some of the sentiments then generally entertained about the popular writers of the age preceding his own. Towards Prior, as exhibiting the characteristics of Spenser, he was especially contemptuous. He indulged in several derogatory comparisons as to the likeness of the writings of that poet to their assumed inspirer. The particular

comparison with which it concludes has for us a special interest; for in it he intimates that Prior had been no more successful in reproducing the style of Chaucer than he had that of Spenser. Yet while he expressed an opinion to that effect, he expressed it guardedly. He spoke as if he were not absolutely certain of the truth of the criticism he made. He was sufficiently a student of Spenser to feel justified in taking the position about him he did. In the case of Chaucer there was not familiarity enough with his language to beget this confidence. The very couplet, therefore, which contained the disparaging comparison showed Armstrong's distrust of his own knowledge as well as of the knowledge of the poet whose imitation he was attacking. It reads as follows:

"As like as (if I am not grossly wrong)
Erle Robert's mice to aught e'er Chaucer sung."

While distrust consequently existed, it was not based upon certainty of knowledge. But though the latter lingered, it was nevertheless coming. It was therefore merely a question of time when doubt of the accuracy of these reproductions of the language of the past would be followed by denial. This increasing suspicion had much to do with the fact that few of these imitations were produced after the middle of the eighteenth century. It is very rarely, indeed, that they make their appearance in the latter half of it. Still, one almost as poor as any that preceded it can be found as late as 1791 in the periodical paper called the 'Bee,' which was edited by Dr. Anderson.[1] But the occurrence of such pieces at

[1] Vol. iv., p. 182.

this period is, after all, exceptional. They are little more than solitary survivals of a poetic fashion which had had for a while a run with a certain class. From the outset these imitations had been doomed to die. As poetical exercises they had evidently failed, and that had been the sole justification for perpetrating them at all. Their futility was even more manifest than their inaccuracy. The persons who would be impressed by them would necessarily not be those who appreciated Chaucer. Those who did not care or found it difficult to read what he wrote could hardly be expected to turn willingly to what some one else wrote of a similar nature, which had nothing to recommend it but a supposed resemblance to an original they did not like or could not understand.

At the same time, there existed a widespread, though rather vague, feeling that there was a good deal in Chaucer that was worth knowing if it could be got at easily. His devotees were few, but they were filled with the enthusiasm which every great author succeeds in inspiring for himself. As, moreover, they were usually men of exceptional cultivation, their intensity of conviction made an impression even upon those who had not the slightest inclination to share their supposed labors. This feeling was an important agency in stimulating the endeavors that were made during the eighteenth century to turn, or, as it was called, to translate, the writings of the poet into the current English of the time. The desire to know without taking the trouble to learn was as potent then as now; though, in consequence of the comparatively limited number of subjects that pressed upon the attention, there was not so much of an effort to make

the path to omniscience short as it was to make it easy. The practice of modernization began, as we have seen, with Dryden; at least it was he who made it popular. It was persistently kept up after he had once shown the way. It is only within a comparatively short period that it has been abandoned, if even yet it can be said to have been abandoned. That it contributed at first to spread the name of Chaucer may be conceded. Farther than that it is hardly safe to go: though that it induced some to seek the acquaintance of the original may be admitted as a possible, but by no means as a necessary, result. To the reader of to-day, indeed, it would seem that most of these modernizations must have had the effect of deterring men from the study of the poet rather than stimulating them to pursue it. They were generally uninteresting. If at all interesting, they were unfaithful. They furnish as a whole a signally dreary addition to that dreary body of literature which grows up about and incrusts the writings of a man of great genius, which cannot be ignored by the conscientious student of his works, though its examination is as unprofitable usually as it is invariably tedious.

Wretched as these modernizations have usually been, they have played a far from insignificant part in the history of Chaucer's reputation. To understand the feelings that led to their production, and the feelings with which at different periods they have been regarded, is to gain a fair comprehension of the changes that during the past two hundred years have taken place in the opinions held by men about the poet. Hence, it becomes a matter of necessity to recount their history fully. They owe

their rise, in the first place, to the existence of certain beliefs about Chaucer and the language in which he wrote. These beliefs, once almost universally prevalent, will not seem altogether strange now; for, though they have long been dying, they are still a long way from being dead. Strictly they concerned no one author in particular. They were in the nature of generalizations about the English tongue, and the fate that was sure, sooner or later, to overtake every one who intrusted to it the preservation of his name and fame. Still, Chaucer, as the acknowledged supreme head of all who had written in the early speech, served almost invariably to point the moral that was drawn. Hence, in making him the central figure in the discussion of the causes that brought about these attempts at modernization, we are only following the custom of our fathers.

The first, then, of these beliefs was that the language of Chaucer, like that of all the writers of his time, was obsolete. It was obsolete not in the sense that it presented frequently recurring difficulties in the way of its comprehension, but in the sense that it required a special and prolonged course of study for its mastery. For all practical purposes it was a dead language. It might, indeed, be easier to acquire than Latin or Greek, or the English of the tenth century. But while the degree of difficulty varied in its favor, the nature of it was essentially the same. Even though, as compared with the classic tongues, the task of gaining a knowledge of it might be less burdensome in itself, the facilities for gaining this knowledge were far fewer. Dictionaries were indispensable for its comprehension; grammars

were desirable. The one of these helps existed very imperfectly; the other did not exist at all. Nor was this notion of the complete obsoleteness of Chaucer's language limited to the men who paid no attention to the literature much earlier than that of their own time. There was widespread ignorance everywhere of everything written before the Elizabethan period. The natural magnifying of the unknown as the terrible took place. Moreover, even those men of letters who had made incursions into this mysterious realm brought back alarming reports of the toilsome nature of the journey, and were pretty unanimous in the view that, however stately may have been the literary structures that had been erected there in former ages, they had now become little more than heaps of ruins.

To the obsoleteness of Chaucer's language, in particular, a succession of witnesses bore the most unqualified testimony. In the seventeenth century there were now and then found persons who took exception to this view. Sir Aston Cokayne, for instance, has among his poems an epigram in which he denounces those who hold such an opinion as unacquainted with their own tongue. These are his words:

> "Our good old Chaucer some despise: and why?
> Because they say he writeth barbarously.
> Blame him not [Ignorants] but yourselves, that do
> Not at these years your native language know."[1]

The work containing these lines was published in 1658. It is clear from them that the view stigmatized was even

[1] Cokayne's *Chain of Golden Poems* (London, 1658), p. 155.

then a view widely entertained. It naturally did not become less prevalent as time went on. After the seventeenth century the obsoleteness of the poet's language was a fact, to all appearance, universally accepted. From the number who assumed it, or bewailed it, I select a few who represent various grades of culture and different periods of time. Among the greatest was the poet Dryden. In 1679, in the dedication of his play of 'Troilus and Cressida,' he adverted to the difficulty of reading Chaucer. "It would mortify an Englishman," he wrote, "to consider that from the time of Boccace and Petrarch the Italian has varied very little; and that the English of Chaucer, their contemporary, is not to be understood without the help of an old dictionary." Elsewhere the same sentiments are expressed by him in still stronger language. In 1711, Fenton sent to the dramatist Southerne an epistle in verse which was mainly taken up with critical remarks upon the history of poetry. It has, besides, an interest of its own as one of several evidences that the Popean couplet existed before Pope had produced anything which any one felt it desirable to imitate; that while it is to his genius that couplet owes its universality as well as the perfection of its finish, it would have been developed after a fashion had he never lived. In the course of his epistle, Fenton, in paying a compliment to his countrywomen, expressed the general feeling that existed about the language of Chaucer. The muse of poetry, he said, had in Greece only a Venus and a Helen to celebrate; but when she came to Great Britain,

"A thousand radiant nymphs she here beheld,
Who matched the goddess and the queen excelled.
To immortalize their loves she long essayed,
But still the tongue her generous toil betrayed:
Chaucer had all that beauty could inspire,
And Surrey's numbers glowed with warm desire:
Both now are prized by few, unknown to most,
Because the thoughts are in the numbers lost."[1]

Here it will be observed that not only is Chaucer looked upon as obsolete, but also a writer as late as Surrey. Spenser likewise, and indeed with much more reason, was permitted to share with the great early poet in the dubious renown of unintelligibility. Chesterfield, for instance, who, in his letters to his son, touched incidentally upon everything, whether he knew anything about it or not, could not be expected to make an exception of this particular topic. A reference to it occurs in the course of some remarks of his upon the subject of Latin composition. He was particularly urgent that those words only should be employed which were found in the writers of the Augustan age, or of the age immediately preceding. To enforce his point he carefully explained to the boy the distinction between the pedant, and the gentleman who is at the same time a scholar. The former affected rare words found only in the pages of obscure or antiquated authors rather than those used by the great classic writers. "By this rule," he went on to say, "I might write to you in the language of Chaucer and Spenser, and assert that I wrote English because it

[1] *An Epistle to Mr. Southerne from Mr. El. Fenton from Kent*, Jan. 28, 17$\frac{10}{11}$ (London, 1711).

was English in those days: but I should be a most affected puppy if I did so, and you would not understand three words of my letter."[1] The sentiment of Chesterfield is, in a general way, just enough; yet it is evident that he is speaking not from the fulness of knowledge, but from the fulness of ignorance. His words imply a degree of remoteness on the part of the poets he mentioned which did not exist, and on his own part a degree of intimacy with their writings in the existence of which there is still less reason for believing; for if he could have written in their English, he would have been aware that his son would not have found the difficulty in reading it which he fancied. Yet this exaggerated conception of the difference between the language of the writers of the past and of those of his own day represented unquestionably the current belief of his time. No matter whether the sentiment was uttered by known or unknown men, by authors obscure then and unheard of now, it was invariably the same.

Deliverances of this character, in which Chaucer was constantly brought in to illustrate the transitoriness of earthly reputation, are recorded in abundance on the pages of the books and magazines of the period. He was constantly compared to men whose reputation must rest not upon what they have said themselves, but upon what is said of them by others. His fame was like that of a great orator whose words have utterly perished, or that of a great actor who must trust for remembrance to the admiration his abilities inspire in his own age and the tradition it hands down. Yet the one supreme

[1] Letter dated Sept. 27, 1748.

characteristic of the renown of the great poet is its power of self-perpetuation. The fame of the player is liable to perish, because it is unable to leave anything by which posterity can judge it directly. Yet this evident distinction between the two professions seems rarely to have occurred to the minds of the men of that age. In 1730, the great actress Mrs. Oldfield died, and was buried with much pomp in Westminster Abbey. A few years later a writer, witnessing her resting-place among England's famous dead, was led to moralize upon the transitoriness of the reputation which the stage confers. Yet he implied that there was about it nothing peculiar. The same decay of remembrance was sure to overtake the great writers who were sleeping their last sleep by her side. As he expressed it,

"In vain secure of deathless praise
There poets' ashes come,
Since obsolete grows Chaucer's phrase,
And moulders with his tomb."[1]

This feeling about Chaucer began to pass away after Tyrwhitt's edition of the 'Canterbury Tales' had been published; but it passed away very slowly. The utterances of the early part of the eighteenth century still continued to be repeated at its close. In spite of the vast advance in the knowledge of the poet's language, nothing apparently could shake the belief of men in its archaic and incomprehensible character. In 1785 Pinkerton, under the assumed name of Robert Heron, published a volume entitled 'Letters on Literature.' In it

[1] *Fawkes and Woty's Poetical Calendar* (London, 1763), vol. ii., p. 117.

he propounded, among other matters, a scheme for reforming and improving the English tongue. One of his proposals was to add *o* and *a* to words ending in a final consonant. Walpole, in a private letter to him,[1] argued as seriously against this proposition as if it were one with which reason had anything to do. He pointed out the havoc such a course, if adopted, would make with our literature. In the usual way Chaucer was dragged in as the warning example. "All our poetry," he wrote, "would be defective in metre, and would become at once as obsolete as Chaucer."

It will have been observed that in these extracts the assumed obsoleteness of Chaucer was not looked upon as his fault, but as his misfortune. It was not imputed to any defect in him, nor to any variation in the taste of the public. It was simply due to the treachery of a tongue that betrayed the men who intrusted to it their thoughts. The language had so altered since the period in which the poet flourished that he could no longer be understood. As time went on, the difficulty of comprehending him would naturally increase. But this was the least of the burdens that weighed upon the men of letters of that period. In Chaucer's obsoleteness they foresaw their own. The fate that had overtaken him was certain to overtake all who wrote in a changing speech. He was nothing more than the most conspicuous example of the ruin that had already been wrought. Waller, as we have seen,[2] had asserted that he who was anxious for enduring reputation must write in Latin or in Greek. Bacon had before him carried the

[1] Letter to John Pinkerton, dated June 22, 1785. [2] See page 83.

principle into practice. This belief met with little dissent through the century that followed its utterance. Immortality could not be hoped for by him who wrote in the English tongue. Pope, in his 'Essay on Criticism,' carried the doctrine to its logical extreme, and applied its principles to the predecessor he admired and imitated. He summed up the literary situation in the following lines, the last of which remained for a long period a stock quotation:

"Short is the date, alas! of modern rhymes,
And 'tis but just to let them live betimes.
No longer now that golden age appears
When patriot-wits survived a thousand years:
Now length of fame (our second life) is lost,
And bare three-score is all that we can boast;
Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be."

This view found wide and for a time almost universal acceptance. Dennis, the veteran critical campaigner, attacked it, to be sure, almost as soon as it appeared. But his hostility is only a proof of the favor with which it was received. In literary matters he was a born dissenter. He belonged by nature to the opposition, and the cardinal principle upon which he acted was to find fault with any view that had met with general approval. He could not fail to be at times right. In this instance he was so most certainly. But even the few who denied the doctrine of a constantly changing speech did not deny that change was characteristic of certain periods in the history of a speech, and this in the case of English included the period of Chau-

cer. They took the ground that when a language had reached the maturity of its perfection, then its authors might justly hope to live forever, or at least as long as it was maintained in the polished and purified state at which it had arrived. This is the point that was made by Welsted, one of the enemies to whom Pope has given a somewhat unsavory immortality. Yet Welsted, in controverting the view which has just been mentioned, bore witness to the fact that it was the one commonly accepted. "The vulgar opinion," he writes, "therefore is a vulgar error, viz.: that our language will continue to go on from one refinement to another, and pass through perpetual variations and improvements till in time the English we now speak is become as obsolete and unintelligible as that of Chaucer, and so on, as long as we are a people. This is what one of our poets laid down some years ago as an undoubted maxim,

'And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.'

But whoever the writer is, he certainly judged the matter wrong: it is with languages as it is with animals, vegetables, and all other things; they have their rise, their progress, their maturity, and their decay. It cannot indeed be guessed, in the infancy of a people, how many generations may pass ere their language comes to this last perfection; this depends on unforeseen circumstances and events; but when once a tongue has acquired such a degree of excellence, it is not difficult to judge of it, and to see it; though it is as impossible to declare how long it will continue in that purity as it was before to know when it would arrive to it. The

beauty of the Roman language began to fade soon after the subversion of the Commonwealth, and was owing to it, as the loss of their liberty made way for that inundation of barbarous nations which afterwards overran them. The English language, perhaps, may never share the same fate from the same causes; it may remain in its present lustre for many centuries, perhaps not decline from it, till the Divine Will shall think fit, if ever it think fit, to transplant the seats of learning from these to some other parts of the world."[1]

This was the conflicting view about our tongue that came in time to modify the anxiety of men about its future. Still, it was not the one generally taken. The idea contained in the extract given from the 'Essay on Criticism' was reproduced again and again, and with a confidence that proved that no doubt was entertained of its correctness. Bancks, one of the obscure versifiers of the time, drew from it the conclusion, which must have been to him specially comforting, that it was useless to attempt to write well, since even what was best done must sink by change of language into the same forgetfulness as what was done worst. There could, accordingly, be no great incentive for the English writer to spend time and pains upon his productions. His case was similar to that of the man who holds his lands by lease, and who therefore never builds with half the care he would take if they were his to transmit to his descendants.[2] This melancholy forecast exhibits

[1] *Dissertation on the English Language*, prefixed to the volume of Welsted's poetry collected by himself in 1724. Reprinted in Nichols's edition of the works of Welsted (London, 1787), p. 123.

[2] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by J. Bancks (London, n. d.), p. 114.

itself at times in ways that are unintentionally comic. Fenton, from whom a quotation has already been given, is now little known save as one of the assistants whom Pope employed in the translation of the Odyssey. But there were those who in his days looked upon him as a great poet. One of his admirers is a scholar who is now less heard of than even the man he admired. This was a clergyman named Walter Harte. He has, indeed, a certain claim to remembrance from the fact that he was a tutor to Lord Chesterfield's son, and was the author of a biography of Gustavus Adolphus, which, certainly in its first edition, was harder to read than anything that Chaucer ever wrote. Like most of his contemporaries, he also tried his hand occasionally at verse. Among the pieces he composed was a poetical epistle to a young lady, accompanying a present of Fenton's 'Miscellanies.' It concluded with the following lines, the last of which, seriously uttered as it was, reads almost like a travesty of the noted one already quoted from Pope:

> "Not Chaucer's beauties could survive the rage
> Of wasting envy and devouring age:
> One mingled heap of ruins now we see:
> Thus Chaucer is, and Fenton thus shall be."[1]

This unlucky, not to say amazing, comparison was an escapade of the writer's callow days, for he had only reached the age of eighteen when the piece containing it was published. But it is also to be remarked, in passing, that it was not due to Harte's ignorance of the early poet, whose works he spoke of as being a heap

[1] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Walter Harte (London, 1727), p. 98.

of ruins. Though a mere boy, he was nevertheless a scholar. According to the manner of his time he knew his Chaucer. Moreover, he admired him, though the lines that have just been quoted may not be thought to imply much appreciation. Still, whatever may be the value we attach to his praise, it was expressed strongly, and, there is no reason to doubt, sincerely. In the notes upon his translation of the sixth book of Statius, he even speaks of Chaucer as "perhaps the greatest poet among the moderns."[1]

This belief that the perpetual change of the English language was destined to ruin the reputation of all English authors seems to have been an ever-present burden upon the hearts of many whose reputations were not in danger of being seriously affected by the fluctuations of any speech. But it was not confined to them. It was shared by the greatest as well as the meanest of writers. The men of that age, who thought upon the subject at all, had a very real and genuine anxiety about the future of our tongue. The greatest poet of its early period could not be understood. It was merely a question of time when the greatest living poet should, in his turn, become unintelligible. There was one way of escape from this disaster that presented itself to the more hopeful. A possible remedy existed, they felt, if it could only be successfully applied. This was a somewhat mysterious process called 'fixing the language.' The time for the application of that had finally come. The English speech had reached at last a state of perfection which it was hopeless to see surpassed. It was a mat-

[1] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Walter Harte (London, 1727), p. 189.

ter of supremest importance that it should be kept in this delectable condition. Its purity must be guarded from perils that would assail it from without, and from corruptions that were breeding within. Various were the methods suggested to bring about this desirable result. The favorite dream was that of an academy which by the plenary authority conferred upon it, or assumed by it, should preserve to the speech the refinement and polish which in the process of the ages it had acquired.

This is a proposition that still makes its appearance every few years, but in a rather faint-hearted, if not indeed in a sneaking, way; but it was then advocated with almost passionate fervor by one of the most famous of our writers. It was in 1712 that Swift addressed to the Earl of Oxford his celebrated letter upon this subject. The avowed object of this pamphlet, as expressed upon its title-page, was to correct, improve, and ascertain the English tongue. It is instructive to compare his prophecies of what would be with the facts as they are. Every man, Swift said in the course of his letter, could hope to be read with pleasure for only a few years. After the interval of an age he could hardly be understood without an interpreter. If his lordship did not take care to settle the language, he could not promise him his memory would be preserved a hundred years further than by imperfect tradition. All the melancholy forebodings of Waller about the prospects of a fluctuating tongue were repeated with emphasis by the despondent author. One measure there was which, if taken, promised possible relief. Success even with it was doubtful. Still, it was due to the country, due to

the position the earl held as minister of state, that he should see to it that it was fully and fairly tried. This consisted, essentially, in the establishment of a body of literary physicians to whom should be intrusted the preservation of the health of the speech. "If the English tongue," wrote Swift with the utmost solemnity, "were once referred to a certain standard, perhaps there might be found ways to fix it forever; or at least till we are invaded and made a conquest by some other state: and even then our best writings might probably be preserved with care, and grow into esteem, and the authors have a chance for immortality."

That there must be some sort of fallacy in these views is apparent to even the least judicious of the well-intentioned but ill-informed men who at the present day are in a perpetual state of distress about the future of the tongue they speak. The minister of state to whom this letter was addressed did not devise any means for settling the language. He probably did not see his way clear to effecting the object which his friend had at heart. Yet his memory is as well preserved as if he had spent days and nights in wrestling with the problem which Swift presented and he left unsolved. Even though more than a century and a half has gone by since this prophecy of disaster came from the press, its dismal forebodings can be comprehended as easily now as on the very day they made their appearance. Dryden and Pope and Swift still continue to be read; and if Waller is not read as much as formerly, it is not because his language presents any difficulty.

For the fallacies into which Swift and his contem-

poraries fell there is a certain excuse which cannot be conceded to the noisier but far inferior mob of men who, during the last century, have devoted their unsolicited labors to the preservation of the English tongue in its purity. Nothing was then known of the causes which bring about the decay of speech, or of the circumstances under which it undergoes rapid alteration. We now see clearly that the history of language is and must be the history of changes. These changes often encounter at the outset violent reprobation, sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. The purist may call them corruptions if he chooses, and he usually chooses to call them so. Fortunately the great world goes on unheeding, for it has a dim sense of what it needs, which is much better than the clearest sense of those who set up for its linguistic preceptors as to what it does not need. It moreever sees that which the verbal critics fail invariably to see, that language does not grow corrupt of itself; that only when the men who use it grow corrupt, only when they decline in taste, in knowledge, and in morals, does it begin to share in their degradation, and that no speech can ever be made what is called fixed till it has earned its title to that condition by becoming dead. This general principle, which unlearned men have always unconsciously acted on, is now recognized as true by scholars. But among the fallacies lurking in Swift's pamphlet there is one that particularly concerns us here for the bearing it had upon the modernization of Chaucer, both in respect to its desirableness and its necessity. This is the idea that, the farther a language recedes from its sources, the more unlike are its forms to those which it had orig-

inally. It would follow as a consequence that, as between any two periods, the farther apart they are in time, the farther apart they will be in their words and grammatical characteristics. Up to a certain point this may be true, and usually is true. But there is no inevitable necessity that it should be true, and in the history of cultivated tongues it is not true. In the case, indeed, of a language without a literature, the statement is perhaps almost invariably correct. The later the form, the less resemblance it is likely to have to its original. The movement of an uncultivated speech may, in fact, be fairly enough described in general terms as that of a straight line. But the formation of a literature of any sort checks at once this mode of progress. The creation of a great literature arrests it altogether. This is particularly true of modern times, in which the invention of printing has enabled the influence of the written speech to reach the widest possible number of persons. Language in such a case ceases to move in anything like a straight line. On the contrary, it revolves about its literature. Its great authors are read and studied. They influence profoundly the expression as well as the minds of the men by whom they are admired. If through the caprice of taste the writers of any particular age become the favorites of any succeeding one, the speech of the latter period will tend more and more to approach that of the former.

Let us apply this principle to the earliest of the great English poets. If the idea that underlay Swift's letter be true, Chaucer should be more difficult to us than to the men of the eighteenth century. This is doubtless a

view still widely held. It has certainly found frequent expression. "A very little trouble," says Alexander Smith, in speaking of the poet, "on the reader's part in the reign of Queen Anne would have made him as intelligible as Addison: a very little more in the reign of Queen Victoria will make him more intelligible than Mr. Browning."[1] Misleading as is this assertion, it is safe to say that outside of a limited number of scholars it is one which would meet with assent, or at least would fail to meet with contradiction. Yet it is the exact reverse of the truth. Chaucer is not merely nearer to us in thought and feeling than to the men of the eighteenth century, he is much nearer in his language. The difficulty of understanding him has steadily diminished, and will continue to diminish instead of increasing. In the movement English speech is now making, it is going back to its earlier forms instead of away from them. This is especially true of the poetic diction. What was difficult to the eighteenth century is often at present perfectly plain. The greater attention paid to the authors of the past has made their words and phrases and turns of expression familiar. It would be impossible for a lover of literature to say now as did Charles James Fox, that Surrey was too old for him. We can readily infer from this one remark what must have been the general ignorance only a hundred years ago. Nor even was this idea of archaic and unintelligible diction confined to writers as remote as Surrey and Spenser. It extended to Shakspeare. On more than one occasion Dryden spoke of the language of the dramatist, whom he profoundly admired,

[1] *Dreamthorp*, p. 232.

as obsolete and in places unintelligible. Gildon, in his 'Art of Poetry,' published in 1718, tells us also that he had found extracts from "the inimitable Shakspeare rejected by some modern collectors for his obsolete language." To show the injustice of such a charge, he brought together several pages of passages from that author.

Examples like these are not solitary ones; remarks like these are far from being singular. The manner in which the men of letters of the eighteenth century stumbled at words and phrases which, even when not perfectly plain, present but little difficulty, strikes the modern student not merely with surprise, but with amazement. Pope, in satirizing the antiquary Hearne in his third 'Dunciad,' borrowed from Spenser the expression '*mister wight*.' This means 'manner of person.' He carefully defined it in a note as 'uncouth mortal.' Walpole furnishes a more marked example of the prevalent ignorance; for Walpole, while a dilettante student of antiquity, was still a student. He had met in Surrey's description of Geraldine a line in which that poet had spoken of the beauty of his mistress as that "of kind." The word is of course the Old English equivalent of 'nature.' In that sense it was in common use till the middle of the sixteenth century. Walpole, if he read with the slightest attention the authors he professed to read, could hardly have failed to meet with it in this signification scores of times, and to see at once that Surrey must have meant to describe Geraldine's beauty as natural and not artificial. Yet it is in this way he discusses the expression: "I don't know," he

wrote to Sir Horace Mann, "what 'of kind' means, but to be sure it was something prodigiously expressive and gallant in those days by its being unintelligible now."[1]

But the comparative nearness to Early English of the English of our day is most impressively shown by the explanations the poets of the eighteenth century felt called upon to give when they attempted to reproduce archaic speech by what seemed to them archaic words. Their glossaries presuppose an absolute ignorance of terms which are now common, or, even if uncommon in ordinary speech, are distinctly recognized as belonging to the poetic dialect, and not demanding explanation for the readers of poets. Prior, in his ode to the queen, written in 1706, on the success of her majesty's arms, undertook to imitate Spenser's style. While avoiding most of his obsolete words, he retained some few of them, he informs us, in the hope of making the coloring look more like that of the author whom he had chosen as his model. The words which he carefully defines, and begs the pardon of the ladies for introducing, are *behest*, 'command'; *band*, 'army'; *prowess*, 'strength'; I *weet*, 'I know'; I *ween*, 'I think'; *whilom*, 'heretofore'; and two or three more of that kind. Gay, in his 'Pastorals,' published in 1712, was kind enough to add in notes explanations of some of the words his polished readers could not be expected to understand. Among these are the verbs *don*, *doff*, and *ween*, the nouns *glen* and *dumps*, the adjectives *scant* and *deft*, and the adverb *erst*. Towards the middle of the century, Gilbert West produced in imitation of Spen-

[1] Letter dated August 6, 1744.

ser a canto on the 'Abuse of Travelling.' It contained the usual number of words that were felt to require definition. Some of them, like those of his model, needed it a second time. One of the characters, for instance, is termed a paragon. This is explained as "a rival, or one to compare with her." Besides other not specially difficult words found in the glossary to this short poem are the nouns *guise*, *prowess*, *wight*, *behest*, and *caitiff*, the verb *wend*, and the adjective *meet* in the sense of 'fit.' Even a more striking illustration can be found in Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence.' This work was published in 1748, a short time before the author's death. To the first edition was appended a page of explanation of "the obsolete words used in this poem." There were about fifty given with their significations. Of these two or three were obsolete in the sense that they never had any real existence. About half of the whole number which it was deemed necessary to define are now in established use; and about one half of the remainder are in use in the dialect of poetry. It is doubtful if out of the whole list more than three or four would be thought now to require explanation.

Examples of this sort could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Imitations of Spenser, such as was the 'Castle of Indolence,' abounded in the eighteenth century. They usually carried with them a glossary. In many cases it was very necessary, for the words defined were not revivals of the past, but merely blundering creations of those who sought to reproduce its language. With the ignorance of the early speech then prevailing, and with the attempts made to pass the spurious coin-

ages of ignorance as the legitimate linguistic currency of a former time, it is little wonder that the belief should arise that the tongue of Chaucer was something that could not be comprehended except at an enormous cost of time and pains. Yet his traditional repute was such that men who did not really care to know him wished, nevertheless, to know about him. As it was definitely settled in the minds of most that he could not be understood in the form in which he wrote, it became incumbent to put him in some kind of shape in which he could be understood. This idea had formed the burden of several of the commendatory poems that had accompanied Kinaston's version of 'Troilus and Cressida.' The success of that work, however, did not justify any great expectation of a literary revival for the poet by the method which had been there employed. No such demand had been aroused for the portion brought out as to render the publication of the remainder a duty to the public. Nor had the fond anticipation been justified, that through this particular agency Chaucer's fame would reach foreign lands. Latin was clearly not the medium by which the process of literary resurrection was to be accomplished. A way there was, however, which still remained to be tried. This was to turn the poet's writings into the English of the time. Fortunately for its success, Dryden was the first to undertake the task.[1] After having received the sanction of

[1] There may have been an earlier attempt. In booksellers' catalogues I have seen entered a book purporting to have been published in 1641, which is entitled *Canterbury Tales, translated out of Chaucer's Old English into our now usual Language*; but neither with the volume itself nor with any account of it have I ever met.

his great name, it came to be regarded in the century that followed his death as the legitimate course to pursue.

Still, the idea was not in itself new, nor was Chaucer certainly the poet to whom this particular process was originally applied. Spenser had been subjected to the same operation before Dryden took the matter in hand. In 1687, the first book of the 'Fairy Queen' had been brought out in an improved form by a writer who hid himself under the glittering general name of "a person of quality."[1] The work was called 'Spenser Redivivus.' The title-page gave notice that while the poet's essential design had been preserved, his obsolete language and manner of verse had been totally laid aside. The main reason for the course adopted was stated with great decision by this person of quality. He complained that Spenser's style was no less unintelligible than the obsoletest of the English or Saxon dialect. Accordingly, he had chosen to present the poet to "the politely judicious" as "he ought to have been, instead of what is to be found in the poet himself." In this instance the attempt was a failure. The politely judicious did not apparently take much interest in this particular method of reviving Spenser, the poetry of the person who undertook the task evidently not being on a level with his quality. It was quite otherwise, however, with Chaucer. It became the accepted creed of the eighteenth century that his fame could not be preserved by the lines he had written himself, but by what others choose to make of them. It was an object steadily kept in view to replace his rugged verse by the polished and elegant

[1] See Todd's edition of *Spenser* (London, 1805), vol. i., p. clxxix.

diction which, by common consent, was then flourishing with peculiar luxuriance. This was felt to be rendering the author himself a great service, and contributing in some degree to the advancement of knowledge. The work begun by Dryden speedily found imitators. A succession of writers took up the task which he had left incomplete. Before the century had ended, the 'Canterbury Tales' had all been turned into modern English of a certain sort. To some extent other works of Chaucer had likewise been subjected to this process. In the case of these a consistent preference was steadily manifested for those which are now generally conceded to be spurious.

These modernizations, as a whole, are anything but inspiriting. As it had been to a large extent the fashion to imitate Chaucer without reading him, it also became a fashion to modernize him without understanding him. Dryden is to be excepted from this charge. His versions of the ancient poet take the first rank in order of merit as well as in order of time. No student of Chaucer at the present day would think, indeed, of placing them for a moment beside their originals. For that matter it is probable that no student of any day ever did so. But during the eighteenth century students of Chaucer were few. There is little question that it was then the general feeling that the poet's fame had been distinctly benefited by having his ideas expressed in the language of the eighteenth century. In the eyes of most he was not only easier to read, he was far better to read in the modern version than in the original. This feeling was not confined to those who were disposed to deny

his merit. It was prevalent among the few who felt, or at least professed, for him peculiar admiration. Nor is there any reason to distrust their sincerity, even if we do their judgment. For instance, a little piece in praise of the poet can be found in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1740, under the signature of 'Astrophel.' It celebrates Chaucer in a way that must have sounded to the readers of that age like extravagant adulation. He was represented as having the strength and fire of Homer, the sweetness of Ovid, and the majesty of Sophocles. So true, we are told, is he to life, that we fairly seem to see the men of whom he speaks. Yet the composer of this fervent panegyric concludes with some lines which, if they do nothing more, certainly give the impression that the versions then current in the English of the time were fully equal to the original. In them he contrived to pay a double compliment: one to the early poet, and one to the living and the dead author who had associated their names with his. It was a distinguishing merit of the former that he had been the inspirer of the two latter, for, as the writer tells us,

> "Yet by famed modern hands new-minted o'er,
> His standard wit has oft enriched their store;
> Whose Canterbury Tales could task impart
> For Pope and Dryden's choice-refining art;
> And in their graceful polish let us view
> What wealth enriched the mind where first they drew."

Still, this feeling of the equality or superiority of these so-called translations was rarely due to any comparison of them with their originals. It was almost invariably the result of ignorance. The men who preferred the

modernizations preferred them because they knew little or nothing of the sources from which they had been taken. The lack of acquaintance could easily be forgiven, were it not so constantly attended with pretentious criticism. The elder Colman published in the 'Adventurer' an essay containing a vision, in which he represented all authors who had gained great fame as having been enjoined by Apollo to sacrifice those parts of their writings which had been preserved to their injury. Among the rest came Chaucer. He, we are told, "gave up his obscenity, and then delivered his works to Dryden to clear them from the rubbish that encumbered them. Dryden executed his task with great address, and, as Addison says of Virgil in his Georgics, 'tossed about his dung with an air of gracefulness;' he not only repaired the injuries of time, but threw in a thousand new graces."[1] When, in 1774, Warton had published the first volume of his 'History of English Poetry,' the lack of enthusiasm he exhibited for these modernizations excited attention. It was felt that the spirit of the antiquary was prevailing over that of the man of letters. "I am sorry," wrote Walpole to Mason, "Mr. Warton has contracted such an affection for his materials, that he seems almost to think that not only Pope but Dryden himself have added few beauties to Chaucer."[2] At a still later period, and after Tyrwhitt had made the poet accessible even to the indolent, Walpole reiterated his former opinion. Mason had told him of a first edition of Chaucer which might be procured, if he

[1] *The Adventurer*, No. 90, Sept. 15, 1753.

[2] Letter dated April 7, 1774.

desired it, for a guinea. He declined the offer. "I am," he wrote, "though a Goth, so modern a Goth that I hate the black-letter, and I love Chaucer better in Dryden and Baskerville than in his own language and dress."[1]

In remarks like these just quoted there is something more than ignorance. There is really dishonesty. The preference expressed by Colman and Walpole for Chaucer as he appears in Dryden's version rather than as he appears in his own words implies that they were well acquainted with his works in both forms. In the case of neither was this true. Colman's lack of familiarity is shown by the passage already cited. He took the unnecessary pains of exhibiting it still further in another essay in which he spoke of the light sometimes piercing through the very thickest of old Geoffrey's woods.[2] There is plenty of evidence that Walpole had only the most superficial acquaintance with the poet in his original form. The question of preference was therefore not settled in the minds of either by difference of taste, but by want of knowledge. Neither had any more right to sit in judgment upon the merits of the two than the man who can barely read Greek would upon the comparative merits of the 'Iliad' as Homer wrote it and as Pope translated it. Still, a certain traditional cant of the kind indicated lasted down to a late period. Malone, in his life of Dryden, spoke of the judicious retrenchments which that poet made in his modernizations of Chaucer, as well as the beautiful amplifications.[3] Malone, to be

[1] Letter dated Nov. 13, 1781.

[2] *The Connoisseur*, No. 125, June 17, 1756.

[3] Malone's *Prose Works of Dryden* (London, 1800), vol. i., part i., p. 328.

sure, is not a man whose opinions on poetry are to be taken very seriously. But a far greater name than his can be cited in connection with the expression of opinions of this sort. Scott lent a half-hearted support to the view once so generally entertained. He even went so far as to declare that, in his version of the Knight's tale, Dryden had "judiciously omitted and softened some degrading and some disgusting circumstances." Furthermore, he thought that, while the modern poet fell something short of the early poet in simple description and pathetic effect, he had improved upon him in the portion devoted to dialogue and to argumentative discussion.[1] In particular, he spoke with enthusiasm of Dryden's splendid description of the champions who came to assist at the tournament in the Knight's tale, and of his account of the battle itself. He thought, if these passages could not be called improvements upon Chaucer, that they were so spirited a transfusion of his ideas into modern verse as almost to claim the merit of originality.

This utterance of Scott's, as contrasted with previous ones, marks the change that was slowly coming over the minds of men. The superiority of Dryden's version to the original was stoutly maintained during the whole of the eighteenth century. It was a view that continued to last into the opening years of our own. Sporadic judgments of this kind even nowadays crop up occasionally, somewhat to the amazement, and a good deal to the amusement, of the present generation. We have not long ago been assured by an editor of Pope that Dry-

[1] Scott's *Life of Dryden*, p. 499.

den as compared with Chaucer has, upon the whole, "narrated the tales in a higher strain of poetry, in richer and more felicitous language, and with the addition of many new and happy ideas."[1] It is always interesting to stumble upon these survivals of the past. It is probably well to have them as a counter-irritant. For there has unquestionably been a tendency of late to go to the other extreme, and to deny to Dryden's version the merit it undoubtedly has. It is, in fact, now little read, save by the professed students of the literature of the end of the seventeenth century; and it is doubtful if at this day these equal in number the students of the literature of the end of the fourteenth. The result is that it has come to be a fashion to depreciate it, just as it was once a fashion to depreciate the original. As Dryden used to be extolled above Chaucer by men who never read the latter, so he is now often underrated by men who read Chaucer, but do not read him. The manifestations of this ignorance are at times almost scandalous. "Dryden and Pope," wrote Alexander Smith, "did not translate or modernize Chaucer—they committed assault and battery upon him. They turned his exquisitely *naïve* humor into their own coarseness: they put *doubles entendres* into his mouth: they blurred his female faces—as a picture is blurred when the hand of a Vandal is drawn over its yet wet color; and they turned his natural descriptions into the natural descriptions of 'Windsor Forest' and the 'Fables.'"[2] Whatever truth

[1] *Works of Alexander Pope*, edited by the Rev. Whitwell Elwyn, vol. i., p. 120.

[2] Alexander Smith's *Dreamthorp*, p. 232.

there may be in this attack as regards Pope, it is utterly untrue as regards Dryden. There is no absolute necessity resting upon any one to write essays upon either of these poets; but if he feels that it is something that must be done, it is not unreasonable to ask that he shall have the virtue to read what he sets out to criticise. Dryden was not coarse in his modernizations. He intruded nothing offensive or impure. He scrupulously refrained from pandering to the taste of an age which would have welcomed with transport the grossest rendering of a gross tale. If in his verses there is anything that remotely affronts delicacy, there is nothing that affronts decency; and whatever violation of the former squeamishness may discover is due to his original and not to himself.

Dryden's version has played a most important part in the history of Cháucer's reputation. It was for a long period the medium through which whatever knowledge existed of the early poet was communicated to large numbers. It deserves, therefore, a carefulness of consideration and a fulness of examination to which the work of his successors is not in the least degree entitled. Compared with them, his merits are simply supreme. He was, in the first place, happy in the selection of his pieces. He took the tale of the Knight, of the Nun's Priest, and of the Wife of Bath. All three are representative specimens of different sides of Chaucer's genius. In no case, likewise, do they touch upon forbidden ground. But it was in the execution of his modernizations that his superiority over his successors is most noticeable. The work he set out to do was so

well done that it may justify to some extent the enthusiasm of a generation which could hardly be said to know the original. It is, moreover, due to Dryden himself to say that, with all his consciousness of his own abilities, he would never have put forth in his own behalf the claim which his admirers made for him later. "I seriously protest," he wrote, "that no man ever had, or can have, a greater veneration for Chaucer than myself." Certain faults, indeed, he found with the early poet's work, but there was no depreciatory tone in his criticism. The principal blemishes he pointed out were that trivial things were often mingled with those of greater moment, and that occasionally, though rarely, there was a tendency to run into conceits. For these reasons, therefore, Dryden avowedly did not tie himself to a literal translation. "I have often omitted," he wrote, "what I judged unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presumed farther in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true lustre, for want of words in the beginning of our language."

By its very plan, therefore, Dryden's modernization is only a loose paraphrase of the original. It professes to be no more. The two writers, therefore, subject themselves to comparison, both in their language and methods of treatment, almost as much as if they had written independent works upon the same theme. It is under this comparison that the later poet generally fails. At the same time, Dryden understood his author both in the spirit and in the sense. It is not often he

mistakes the meaning, though he sometimes deviates from it purposely. There are two or three instances in which he commits blunders. These may be palliated, even if they cannot be excused, on the ground of the difficulty that existed in those days of ascertaining the right signification. Perhaps the grossest error to be found in his version is in the rendering he gives of a line contained in the speech of Saturn in the Knight's tale. Here the god is represented as declaring that superiority of wisdom, if not of strength, is accorded to age:

> "Men may the old atren but not atrede," 1591.

he says in the words of Chaucer; that is, men may outrun the old, but not outwit them. The idea of this line is exhibited in the modernization in the following remarkable couplet:

> "For this advantage age from youth has won,
> As not to be outridden though outrun."

It is to be presumed that Dryden attached some meaning to these words; though precisely what it could have been may puzzle the reader to decide. Still, mistakes of this kind are very few, and the errors of detail are usually the errors of the printed editions. These sometimes presented wrong readings or inferior readings. No blame, therefore, can fairly attach to the modernizer for not rejecting blunders which he had no means of detecting. It may be taken for granted that Chaucer was an author whom Dryden, so far as the means at his command would permit, had studied with diligence and care.

In the criticisms that have been made upon these

particular modernizations, it is the additions that have received the highest praise. Little has been said one way or another of the omissions. Scott, indeed, called attention to the failure to introduce in the Knight's tale a striking passage in the portraiture of Mars, whose statue has its place in the temple built by Theseus upon the western gate of the lists. Chaucer described the god of war as standing erect in his chariot, arrayed in armor and fierce of aspect. To this description he added the following grim picture, which Dryden left out:

> "A wolf there stood before him at his feet,
> With eyen red, and of a man he eat." 1190.

The propriety of omissions in a paraphrase like this is, however, largely a question of taste and judgment. It is by the alterations, and especially by the amplifications, that the respective merits of the two poets can be best contrasted. For the additions Dryden assumed to himself special credit. His admirers have also been in the habit of pointing them out as signal improvements. Some idea of the expansion that took place may be gathered from the fact that the three tales of Chaucer which he translated number in all nearly thirty-three hundred lines; in the modern version they number about thirty-eight hundred.[1] More than five hundred lines, consequently, have been added. As parts of the original were left untouched, this indicates, relatively, greater amplification than the mere figures given above imply. This expansion extends to lines, to passages, and to ideas. It involves, and indeed invites, a

[1] In precise numbers, 3284 and 3796 respectively.

comparison which, from the very nature of things, puts the modernizer at a disadvantage. Expansion in any sort of writing is rarely an improvement. It is almost impossible that it should be so when applied to the language of a great poet. Dilution of the thought is almost certainly its invariable accompaniment. In the concentration which gives special force to some of Chaucer's lines, it was a vain expectation to rival him in the choice of words. Compression in the Knight's tale in particular had been carried to the farthest extreme consistent with the highest literary effect. There is no other one of his pieces in which the early poet crowds so much into so little space. The story never halts, the interest never flags. It is little wonder, therefore, that Dryden suffers under the test of direct comparison. When we bring into contrast the corresponding passages from the two authors, we see at once how strength has been diminished by the increase of words. It is nothing more than justice to the later poet to select lines and passages which show him at his best; and in the extracts taken preference will generally be given to what, as independent work, would be deemed good, if not excellent. Let us take first the picture of the May morning as drawn by the two poets. Here is Chaucer's description:

"The busy larkè, messager[1] of day,
Salueth[2] in her song the morrow[3] gray;
And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his streamès dryeth in the grevès[4]
The silver dropès hanging on the leavès." 633–636.

[1] Messenger. [2] Salutes. [3] Morning. [4] Bushes, trees.

Dryden's version runs as follows:

"The morning-lark, the messenger of day,
Saluted in her song the morning gray;
And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
That all th' horizon laughed to see the joyous sight;
He with his tepid rays the rose renews,
And licks the dropping leaves and dries the dews."

This instance has been selected at the outset because the number of the lines is the same, and the rendering of the original is much closer than usual. A fairer idea of the difference in method and in expression of the two poets may be obtained in consequence from the comparison. But it is rarely the case that expansion does not occur to a greater or less extent. A careful examination of single lines and couplets will show how inevitably this has been followed in nearly every instance by a dilution of the thought. It is none the less marked because the lines in the modernization are often fine. The passage would be considered good, were not the original better. It is when we come to place the two side by side that we feel how constantly picturesqueness and force have been sacrificed to exigencies of ryme, to rhetorical embellishments, or to inferiority of conception. Chaucer says of Theseus, when about to begin his expedition against Thebes,

"His banner he displayeth and forth rode." 108.

In Dryden we are merely told that

"He waved his royal banner in the wind."

This is not only weaker in force, but it is something worse. The main idea of the original line, itself essen-

tial to the completeness of the story, is hardly more than hinted at in the modernization. The summoning of the retainers by the display of the royal standard was the incident which the earlier poet had in mind and which the later poet missed almost entirely. Again, in the graphic account which Chaucer gives of the scenes on the morning of the great tournament, there is among the details his picture of

> "The foamy steedès on the golden bridle
> Gnawing." 1649.

In Dryden this appears expanded in the following couplet, which is almost as good as the original:

> "The courser pawed the ground with restless feet,
> And snorting foamed and champed the golden bit."

It is rarely, however, that the modernizer is as successful as this. In the description of the scenes painted in the Temple of Mars the early poet mentions among the sights he beheld,

> "There saw I first the dark imagining
> Of felony, and all the compassing." 1138.

The contrivance of crime, and the carrying of it into execution, is expanded by Dryden into the following triplet, with personifications that are in sharp contrast with the directness and force of the original:

> "There saw I how the secret felon wrought,
> And Treason laboring in the traitor's thought;
> And midwife Time the ripened plot to murder brought."

Far inferior to this in the description of these scenes of violence and bloodshed is the utter dilution of thought

in the tremendous line which with a single stroke paints the treacherous assassin—

"The smiler with the knife under the cloak." 1141.

The art of the poet has here left a picture which in its condensed force of suggestion has rendered hopeless the art of the pencil to rival. This vivid image, which stands sharp and distinct before the mind and haunts the memory, is Chaucer's own. In Boccaccio there is only a faint suggestion of it;[1] in Dryden it evaporates into this feeble paraphrase:

"Next stood Hypocrisy with holy leer,
Soft, smiling, and demurely looking down,
But hid the dagger underneath the gown."

It is, in fine, the besetting fault of all these expansions that addition of details does not add to expressiveness or force. When Chaucer, in his description of Emetreus, King of Inde, says that

"His voice was as a trumpè thundering," 1316.

the impression made upon the mind is dissipated instead of being deepened by the augmentation of ideas, involving an augmentation of words as well as their alteration for the worse, in the following couplet:

"Whene'er he spoke, his voice was heard around,
Loud as a trumpet, with a silver sound."

But there is a further disadvantage under which Dryden's version labors as compared with its original. Chaucer has one quality in common with all writers of

[1] Boccaccio has,

"E con gli occulti ferri i Tradimenti
Vide, e le Insidie con giusta apparenza."—*Teseide*, vii., 34.

greatest genius, especially with all those that belong to early periods. This is directness. He knew what he had to say, and he said it; said it simply, though not rudely, nor so barely as to deny it at times the accompaniment of beautiful imagery. But the accompaniment never tended to hide the main thought he was striving to express, or the main incident he was seeking to make prominent. He never indulged in ornament for the mere sake of ornament. His fine passages all have a purpose. Everything he introduces serves invariably to heighten the main effect. It never substitutes for it some other effect, no matter how good in itself. It never diverts the attention from the end in view. Consequently many of his finest passages are apt at first to escape the reader's notice. He is carried along by his interest in the piece as a whole; he fixes his eyes too closely upon the catastrophe to which the events are tending to think much of the beauty that lies beside the way. It is not till he goes back and studies the work in detail that he learns to see how noble many things are in themselves, as well as how skilfully they have been contrived to conduce to the general impression.

It is in this respect that Dryden suffers by comparison. He has made certain additions which, considered by themselves, would be deemed beautiful. For them he has received unstinted praise from his admirers. But in every instance they are fairly open to the criticism that they are out of place or out of character. They are not germane to the situation. Therefore, however good they may be in themselves, they are not good in art. They could never have found admission into the elder

poet's work, not because he was not equal to their production, but because his very greatness as a poet prevented him from saying a fine thing merely because it was a fine thing. As an illustration of this statement I select two passages from the Knight's tale, on which Dryden undoubtedly spent great labor. Of all the additions he made, these have, moreover, been generally regarded as the most conspicuous improvements upon the original. In the first of these, Arcite is going into the woods to gather for himself a garland to celebrate the coming of May. He is represented by Chaucer as making one of those simple and natural utterances which illustrate the directness of the early poet, but which led the eighteenth century to call his lines homely—partly, indeed, because it did not understand how to read them, but mainly because it had a vicious preference for elaborateness of diction. These are the lines of the original:

"Loud he sang against the sunnè sheen,
'May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
Welcome be thou, well fairè freshè May,
I hope that I some greenè getè may.'" 651–654.

It is in lines such as follow that in Dryden's version Arcite welcomes in the May:

"For thee, sweet month, the groves green liveries wear:
If not the first, the fairest of the year:
For thee the Graces lead the dancing Hours,
And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers:
Why thy short reign is past, the feverish sun
The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.
So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,
Nor goats with venomed teeth thy tendrils bite,
As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find
The fragrant greens I seek, my brows to bind."

This addition, or expansion as it may be called, is a fine passage. Nor need fault be found with it because there is little to suggest it in the original. But it lacks simplicity, and it lacks still more naturalness. It is not the sort of speech which the character represented would have made at the time with the thoughts that were crowding in his mind and the feelings that were stirring his heart.

But a far more conspicuous instance of the unsuitableness of Dryden's most famous additions is in the prayer of Palemon to Venus. Chaucer begins it with absolute directness, begins it with precisely the same kind of address that one in real life, so situated and so believing, would have begun it. The following are his opening lines:

"Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venús,
Daughter of Jove and spouse to Vulcanús,
Thou gladder of the mount of Cithæron!" 1363–1365.

Dryden leaves out entirely the first line, and renders the second in this rather stilted phraseology—

"Increase of Jove, companion of the sun"—

in which, moreover, he puts the planet in the place of the goddess. But before introducing these lines in the petition at all, he represents Palemon not as making a prayer to Venus, but as singing a hymn in her honor. This is the passage, some of the ideas of which are borrowed from Lucretius:

"Creator Venus, genial power of love,
The bliss of men below and gods above,
Beneath the sliding sun thou runnest thy race,
Dost fairest shine and best become thy place.

For thee the winds their eastern blasts forbear,
The month reveals the spring and opens all the year.
Thee, goddess, thee the storms of winter fly,
Earth smiles with flowers renewing, laughs the sky,
And birds to lays of love their tuneful notes apply.
For thee the lion loaths the taste of blood,
And roaring hunts his female through the wood:
For thee the bulls rebellow through the groves,
And tempt the stream, and snuff their absent loves.
'Tis thine, whate'er is pleasant, good, or fair:
All nature is thy province, life thy care."

These fifteen lines added have a beauty of their own, but they are out of place here. It is a petition that the story demands at this point, not a rhapsody. The words which Palemon is represented as uttering are not the words that any one who was very earnest in his prayer would have spent his time in making. The addition lacks fitness, and therefore fails in the requirements of the highest art. This same prayer, as it appears in the modernization, is also full of conceits for which contemptible is scarcely too hard an epithet. Nor are these unknown to other portions of the various versions. Their appearance makes it difficult to understand what Dryden meant when he said that Chaucer occasionally, though rarely, displayed a tendency to fall into conceits. From them never was any author more free. This is something that cannot be said of his modernizer. In describing the suffering of Arcite while parted from his mistress, his lack of sleep, his loathing of food, Dryden tells us that his hero could not weep because he did not eat. As he expresses it,

"Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears,
For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears."

Chaucer, it hardly need be said, is not in the slightest degree responsible for this novel physiological statement. There is an even worse illustration in the following lines in which Arcite complains of his hopeless love:

> "Fierce love has pierced me with his fiery dart,
> He fries within and hisses at my heart.
> Your eyes, fair Emily, my fate pursue;
> I suffer for the rest, I die for you.
> Of such a goddess no time leaves record,
> Who burned the temple where she was adored."

The conceit with which the passage closes has not even the merit of originality. It is borrowed from Carew, and, with all its references to fire, is frigid enough for Cowley.

This lack of simplicity, with its inevitable tendency to the use of fine language, is most perceptible in the rendering of the pathetic passages. It is in these that the early poet shows his supreme mastery of his art. He is never tame, and he never overdoes. The celebrated parting scene in which the dying Arcite bids adieu to the woman he has loved so long, and for whom he has lost his life, is remarkable in Chaucer for the perfect appropriateness of the words to the situation. Here are a few of the lines:

> "Alas the wo! Alas the painès strong
> That I for you have suffered and so long!
> Alas the death! alas, mine Emily!
> Alas, departing of our company!
> Alas, mine heartès queen! alas, my wife!
> Mine heartès lady, ender of my life!
> What is this world? what asken men to have?
> Now with his love, now in his coldè grave,

Alone, withouten any company.
Farewell, my sweetè foe, mine Emily;
And softè take me in your armès twey,
For love of God, and hearken what I say."

The effectiveness of these lines is, in a measure, marred by separation from the context. Yet the most careless reader will be struck by their absolute simplicity. They are the ejaculations of a dying man, natural to the occasion, and pathetic because of their naturalness. Instead of these broken words, which go to the heart because they come from the heart, Dryden has given us a most elaborate death-bed discourse. It is nearly double the length of the original. It is unnatural in some of its thoughts, it is occasionally stilted in its language; and it almost plunges into the region of bathos in the following couplet:

"This I may say, I only grieve to die
Because I lose my charming Emily."

Besides the three tales which have been mentioned, Dryden made a version of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' He turned its seven-line stanza into heroic couplets. This necessitated even a wider departure from the original than was required in the modernization of the other works in which the measure was essentially the same. He made also a certain change in the character of the piece by representing the scene portrayed as a fairy show, and the two companies of adherents of the flower and of the leaf as fairies who had once been clothed with human bodies, but were destined to wander in the shades of night till doomsday. For additions of senti-

ment in modernizations of this kind there can be given a sort of justification; but addition or alteration of incident is certainly unwarranted in what purports to be a translation. In this respect Dryden took great liberties, and his example was followed by his successors. Unauthorized additions occur in various parts of these pieces. Interpolations of particulars, and even of incidents, are found, for which there was not a remote suggestion in his original. The grossest case of this kind is in his version of the Wife of Bath's tale. This is essentially a fairy story. In Chaucer the heroine is a young and beautiful woman who has by unmentioned, but evidently malignant, agency been transformed into a foul, ill-favored crone. It is implied, though not asserted, that in this condition she must remain until some one can be prevailed upon to receive her as a bride with all her deformity, and ignorant of the transformation that is to restore her to her true shape. It is for this end, therefore, that she is laboring solely. But in Dryden's version she is no mere passive sufferer from a wrong inflicted by a malign and hostile influence possessed of preternatural power. She is herself a proficient in magic art. She has the infernal world at her command. When her offer is accepted by the knight, she spreads her mantle on the ground, and transfers him with furious rapidity to King Arthur's court, while his horse is also brought thither by some devil subject to her will. The alteration was objectionable because it was false to the original, false to the belief upon which the original was founded, and false to the central idea of the story. The beautiful woman of Chaucer, suffering from the influence of

malignant hate, becomes in Dryden a practitioner of the black art, leagued with the powers of the lower world, and sharing in the privileges with which subservience to their will is rewarded.

One other piece contained in this volume remains to be noticed. This is the one called 'The Character of a Good Parson.' It has often been spoken of as a modernization of the character of the Parson in the general Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales.' It is certain that such was the place it filled in the volumes of collected versions that were subsequently published. Still, this it was not, nor did it so pretend to be. The title-page prefixed to it sufficiently indicated its nature. That described it not as modernized from Chaucer, but as imitated from him and enlarged. Of the latter fact there can be no question. The forty lines of the original are represented in the imitation by one hundred and forty. It was written at the instigation of Pepys, as we have seen, and the plain purport of its composition was to celebrate the nonjuring clergy who had given up place and profit rather than abandon their allegiance to the house of Stuart. Consequently, Chaucer's words furnish little more than general hints for the portraiture of the character. Dryden, therefore, cannot justly be censured for failing to adhere faithfully to a description which he had purposely taken in order to introduce variations suitable to the occasion. Far more fault can rightfully be found with his use of these professed translations for the sake of intruding comments upon the political situation of his time, and excuses for the license of his own writings. "The churles rebelling" of Chaucer—a pretty

plain reference to Wat Tyler's insurrection—becomes in Dryden the rebellion of the churls "against the native prince;" and, lest there should be any doubt as to his allusion to the revolution of 1688, he adds, with no authority for it from his original, the further particulars of "bought senates" and "deserting troops." In the Wife of Bath's tale he even defended himself against Collier's attack upon the immorality of his dramatic productions. There he pleaded as an excuse the evil influence of a wicked monarch. He put in Chaucer's mouth the following remarks about the stage, though Chaucer flourished at a period when the stage had no existence:

> "The king himself, to nuptial ties a slave,
> No bad example to his poets gave:
> And they not bad, but in a vicious age,
> Had not to please the prince debauched the stage."

But indeed, throughout these poems, Dryden was in many places intentionally unfaithful to his original. The sentiments expressed were his sentiments, and not those of Chaucer. The ideas were frequently the ideas of the seventeenth century, and not of the fourteenth.

I have taken pains to do justice to Dryden's modernization by quoting some of its fine passages as well as some of its failures. The lines that have been cited, comparatively few as they are, make the essential differences between the two writers sufficiently recognizable. After such a comparison there will be few found to deny that the later poet is inferior to the earlier, not only in felicity of diction, but in the knowledge of his art. The judgment that ever rated him superior was born of igno-

rance, not of critical insight. But it by no means follows because Dryden's version was not equal to the original that it was a bad thing in itself. Yet this is an assertion now sometimes made. It is most unjust. Successive generations have borne the witness of time to its excellence as well as to its popularity. While this may not be absolutely binding upon modern opinion, it is sufficient to require that those who decry should at least take the trouble to read. Dryden's modernizations, with all their admitted defects, are, in truth, noble-spirited poems. The gold of Chaucer has been transmuted into silver, it is true; but silver is a precious metal, even if not so precious as gold.

Much less praise can be awarded to Pope, who was the next in order to appear with attempts at modernization. In fact, scarcely any praise can be awarded to him at all. Little attention would ever have been paid to his versions, had it not been for the fame he acquired by his other works. It was in the sixth volume of 'Tonson's Miscellany' that his first effort in this direction was published. The tale he selected was the Merchant's, and the title he gave it was 'January and May.' Though it came out in 1709, when Pope was but twenty-one years old, he professed that it had been written when he was but sixteen or seventeen years of age. The assertion has been questioned, but there is nothing in the execution of the work to make the statement seem at all extraordinary in the case of a poet so unusually precocious as was he. There is, indeed, in the lines the same smoothness of versification he always displayed; there is the same perfectly polished, if somewhat artificial, phraseol-

ogy to which we are accustomed; there is the anticipation at least, if not quite the realization, of that same pointed expression which, as it came to be developed later, was to contribute so large a share to the small currency of English quotation. The things that are lacking are not so much things of the intellect as of the spirit. We look in vain in these mechanically correct and carefully balanced lines for the absolute naturalness of the original, its exquisite ease, and the delicate humor which makes itself felt everywhere, and is not obtrusive anywhere. For it is the special characteristic of Pope's modernizations that he puts in the very front what Chaucer purposely kept in the background. Where the one suggests or insinuates, the other asserts. Much, too, has been omitted, and the omissions are not in the nature of improvements. Still less are the changes. Even the daring but delicious absurdity of transforming Pluto and Proserpine into the king and queen of faery, and putting in the mouths of the rulers of the gloomy underworld of heathen mythology a discussion upon the moral character of Solomon, this has been altered—judiciously altered, the judicious editors of Pope tell us. Nor even on the score of morality was there any gain, though claims to this effect have been constantly made. In fact, there was nothing that could be gained on that score, if the piece was to be translated at all. Certain words and phrases which would have been deemed specially indecorous do not, indeed, appear; but the ideas and facts which suggest them are neither hidden nor veiled. Pope's omissions, upon which stress has been laid, are due mainly to the fact that he omitted a great

deal of his original without any special reference to its moral quality.

But his failure was far greater in the prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale. His version of this appeared in 1714, in a poetical collection which was edited by Steele, and bore Tonson's imprint upon its title-page. In this volume it occupied the first place. The prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale is a great poem as it came from Chaucer's hands. In certain respects it is not surpassed by anything he ever wrote. Pope's version of it hardly rises at best above agreeable commonplace. It is shorter by the omission of nearly half the original. But there has a good deal more been left out than a number of lines. The humor, the wit, the keen observation of life, the undertone of melancholy which runs persistently through the rollicking utterance that characterizes this remarkable production—these are but faintly reflected in this paraphrase. The outspokenness of the original has been generally avoided or rather omitted. For it, however, there has been substituted a veiled coarseness and meretriciousness, intrinsically more disagreeable. What was merely incidental in the early poem became in its modernized version the one thing upon which the attention was supremely fixed. Pope, indeed, failed utterly to comprehend the character which Chaucer was drawing. In this he has had plenty of imitators, both in earlier and in later times. But their lack of comprehension affects only themselves; his affected the reputation of the poet and the character of the piece. The result was that he disfigured what he did not understand. The grossness which lay upon the surface he caught

and reproduced. Of the deeper elements that go to make up one of the most marked characters in the whole range of creative fiction he had not the slightest conception. The Wife of Bath in his hands is simply a quick-witted, vulgar woman, who her whole life long has given full way to the indulgence of her passions, and cared for little else. The purely sensual side of her nature is all that is shown in the modernization. The poetical element is gone entirely. Nothing is seen of the half-sad and yet reckless abandon with which she reconciles herself to the approach of that future of joylessness which she recognizes that the inevitable hours are bringing; nothing of the exultation with which she comforts herself with the thought that, come what will, she has had her day; nothing of the attitude of mind of one who mourns her lost youth, not because years have brought sorrow for the sins she has committed, but because the power of committing sin has passed away forever. No smoothness of versification, no prettiness of style, not even vigor of expression, could compensate in the slightest for the failure to realize and reproduce a character which is not that of an individual, but is a type. It can only be said of Pope that he did not comprehend it, and that it would not have lain in his power to recreate it, even had he comprehended.

One other work of Pope is due to Chaucer. This is the 'Temple of Fame,' which appeared in 1715. In an advertisement prefixed to the original edition, he said that the hint of the piece was taken from the 'House of Fame;' and that while the design was in a manner altered, and the descriptions and particular thoughts

his own, yet he could not suffer the work to be printed without this acknowledgment; and that the reader who wished to compare his poem with Chaucer should begin with the third book of the corresponding production of the latter. The advertisement is a singular one. It would be almost sufficient evidence of itself to prove that Chaucer was little read at that period. For it was a good deal more than a hint that was taken from the early poem. To it the 'Temple of Fame' owed its plan and its whole action, besides most of the circumstances narrated. Long passages were modernized as closely as in the case of the pieces which he professedly translated. Some of them are taken from the second book of Chaucer's work, and not from the third. True it is that great variations exist, that new details are introduced, and old ones omitted; but most of the modern poem could not have had an existence without the previous existence of the earlier. Acquaintance with Chaucer's writings, which was steadily, though slowly, increasing on the part of the educated public, seems to have led Pope in 1736 to subjoin the prominent parallel passages, or to indicate precisely where they were to be found. He was apparently under the impression that this show of quotation would cause the delusive word 'hint' to be taken in another sense from that which it really means, and in which it was originally employed. At any rate, it has had this effect, whether intended or not, as any one can discover by reading the remarks of his editors.

This imitation, if we do not choose to call it a modernization, had a singular fate for Pope's productions,

though not perhaps a very unusual one for those of some authors. It was very generally approved and very little read. That it was greatly superior to the 'House of Fame' was assumed as a self-evident proposition by the men of the eighteenth century. "The original vision of Chaucer," wrote Dr. Johnson, "was never denied to be much improved." He admitted, however, that the modern work was turned silently over, and seldom quoted or mentioned with either praise or blame. There are not too many at the present day who are familiar with the 'House of Fame.' In the last century there were almost none. This may be thought to detract somewhat from the value of the universal judgment which, according to Johnson, declared the imitation an improvement upon the original. The recognition in a particular age of the superiority of a poem which few read over one which nobody reads at all can hardly be expected to weigh heavily in the opinion of the ages that follow, never inclined to be particularly deferential to the criticism of their predecessors, even when it is based upon the fullest knowledge. No one at this day, who has carefully studied both pieces, would think for a moment of placing the modern work on a level with the ancient. Let us, however, be just in giving what testimony we can to the survival of this antiquated opinion. The poet Campbell looked upon the 'Temple of Fame' as superior to the 'House of Fame.'[1] In controverting Warton's estimate of the two, he adduced several sage reasons

[1] *Specimens of the British Poets*, by Thomas Campbell (London, 1819), vol. ii., p. 18.

for his belief. He found absurd and fantastic matter in Chaucer's work, much of which had been judiciously omitted by his imitator. The philosophy of fame, he assures us, comes with much more propriety from the poet himself than from the beak of a talkative eagle. In Campbell's words the expiring note of eighteenth-century criticism finds its final utterance.

Pope's versions had, in one respect, differed materially from Dryden's. Instead of expanding, he contracted. He threw out what, for any reason, failed to suit his taste or design, and his omissions were both numerous and important. A comparison of the length of the pieces makes this point very clear. The Merchant's tale in Chaucer consists of eleven hundred and seventy-two lines; in Pope it consists of eight hundred and twenty. The omissions in the prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale are still greater. In the original, the piece consists of eight hundred and fifty-six lines; in the modernization, of four hundred and thirty-nine. A small portion of it, in the form of dialogue, is perhaps necessarily discarded, and ought not to be counted in the comparison. These two methods of treating Chaucer had each their followers among the men who continued the work on these modernizations. Two or three of them were as faithful to the original as they knew how to be. The rest expanded or contracted at will. One side could plead in favor of its course the authority of Dryden; the other that of Pope.

With the work of these two great authors end the modernizations that have had any influence in spreading, even in a doubtful way, the reputation of Chaucer.

Now begins a series of versions which few probably read at any period, and which men of the present day are so far from reading that it is rarely that they know of their existence. A brief account of these dreary attempts, and of the time in which and the circumstances under which they appeared, will be sufficient to satiate the curiosity of the most exacting student of the poet. Let us continue with the 'Canterbury Tales.' The next after Pope to attack any part of this work was the celebrated actor Betterton. He had died in 1710, but had left behind him a version of the Reeve's tale, and of most of the general Prologue. These were first published in the miscellany which Lintot brought out in 1712. Neither the opening nor the conclusion of the Prologue was translated. Nor were the descriptions of all the characters it contained modernized. The Parson's Betterton would naturally leave untouched, out of respect for Dryden, or out of dread of comparison. But he also neglected to include the characters of the Clerk of Oxford, of the Cook, and of the members of the guilds. The authorship of these versions, it may be said in passing, has sometimes been attributed to Pope, who was pretty certainly the editor of the miscellany in which they appeared. Fenton communicated some circumstances to Harte which convinced Harte that this was the case, and Harte communicated his conviction to Joseph Warton, who duly communicated it to the public in his edition of Pope.[1] It had previously, however, been noted by Dr. Johnson, though apparently not much weight was given by him to the view. There is

[1] Vol ii., p. 166.

certainly no good ground for this opinion in the execution of the pieces. That Pope may to some extent have revised the lines is not impossible; but their character precludes the idea that genius of any sort had anything to do with their composition.

Betterton's contribution to the modernization of Chaucer was not large. It is, however, large enough to make us aware that poetry suffered no loss by his having made acting a profession and not literature. But the names of the men who afterwards interested themselves in the production of these versions are in some cases little known to fame in any department of human endeavor. It is not always an easy matter, accordingly, to discover with certainty precisely who they were. The interest that belongs to several of them is connected with bibliography rather than with biography or literary history. As regards the character of the work they did, its merits can be summed up in a few words. The question with all these versions is not whose is the best, but whose is the least bad. The men who composed them frequently failed to understand the author whom they set out to make the rest of the world understand. Still, their supreme failure consisted in what they wrote after they did understand. There was also great omission of pertinent and great addition of impertinent details. But even if the sense were perfectly preserved, what was invariably lost in the transfusion was the poetry. To employ a word often used in those days, Chaucer was not so much translated as he was transmogrified. A certain number, beginning with Betterton, followed Pope in omitting in their versions part of the original. A

plausible defence can be set up for this course, and under the circumstances it will by some be reckoned to their credit. It was the next best thing to not doing the work at all.

In the same year in which Betterton's posthumous work was published appeared a modernization of the Miller's tale under the title of the 'Carpenter of Oxford.' It was the work of Samuel Cobb, one of the instructors in Christ's Hospital, London, and was dedicated to the dramatist Rowe. It adhered far more closely to its original than most of these versions. In fact, there is but little difference in the number of lines belonging to each. That is its principal merit. But the little volume in which it was contained has an interest of another sort quite independent of anything connected with what was furnished by Cobb. Appended to it were the two brief imitations of Chaucer by Prior, to which reference has already been made. They exhibit in a striking way the knowledge, or rather the lack of knowledge, of the period about the early poet. Prior was not content with merely making an effort to reproduce the language of a time he did not understand and the vein of an author whom he had not studied sufficiently to appreciate. He aimed to show his dexterity in a double way. Of one of his own imitations — that entitled 'Susannah and the Two Elders'—he added a version "attempted," as he expressed it, "in the modern style." To write a loose poem which was a spurious reproduction of the past was bad enough; but it argued a singular lack of judgment to deprive it of its incomprehensibility, the only value it had, by setting it in later and better ryme. Literary history can

afford no better specimen of an imitation in paste of pinchbeck jewelry.

For many years after this nothing further was accomplished in the modernization of Chaucer's greatest work. Dr. Morell's edition of the poet, so far as it was published, included only the Prologue and the Knight's tale. To these he appended the versions of Dryden and Betterton. The parts of the Prologue which the latter had left untranslated were now modernized, so as to make the piece complete. The volume appeared first in 1737. It was not until four years later that a movement to put into modern English the whole of the 'Canterbury Tales' was in part accomplished. It was the work of George Ogle. In 1739 he brought out a version of the Clerk of Oxford's tale. To it he prefixed a preface in the shape of a letter to a friend, in which he explained his design. In it he also gave a version of the portions of the general Prologue which had been omitted by Betterton. Ogle was an ardent admirer of Chaucer and an ardent believer in modernization — two things which in these later days strike men as essentially incompatible. It was, he fancied, only by this method of translation that the greatness of the early poet could be fully made known and become generally recognized. "I hold Mr. Dryden," he wrote, "to have been the first who put the merit of Chaucer into its full and true light by turning some of the Canterbury Tales into our language, as it is now refined, or rather as he himself refined it." To one taking this ground modernization was necessarily a process that ought to be continued. The whole of the early poet's greatest work should at all events be made

accessible to those who cared to read. It is rather a matter of inference than of direct evidence that Ogle set about making a complete version of the 'Canterbury Tales' into the English of the time. It is certain that he did enough towards it to render that intention highly probable. He adopted, without any regard to their comparative merits, all work in the shape of modernization which had already been done by Dryden, Pope, Betterton, and Cobb. He naturally also included his own version of the Clerk of Oxford's tale, and of portions of the general Prologue. With these as a starting-point, he seems to have felt himself in a position to attempt the conquest of the whole work.

He called in the aid of others, and with their help three volumes of 'The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer modernized by several hands' were published by Tonson in 1741. Besides the versions which have been already described, the following new ones were contributed to this undertaking. The spurious tale of Gamelin, which Urry's edition had first contained, was modernized by Samuel Boyse; so, also, was the Squire's tale. The Man of Law's tale was modernized by Henry Brooke, the Friar's tale by Jeremiah Markland, and the Summoner's tale by a Mr. Grosvenor. Ogle himself versified all the links between the eleven tales which were comprised in this edition. This included the unfinished fragment of the Cook's tale. He did not, indeed, confine himself to Chaucer. In order, apparently, to be spared the reproach of incompleteness in any particular, he added to Boyse's translation of the original a modernized version of the conclusion of the Squire's tale

which Spenser had embodied in the fourth book of the 'Fairy Queen.' The list here given embraces all the pieces that appear in the three volumes published in 1741. It is almost certain, however, that the deviser of the scheme did not purpose to stop at this point—that he had it in mind to go on and bring out a complete version of the 'Canterbury Tales.' So far as he went, Ogle followed precisely the order of the poems in the folio editions of Chaucer. As in them the tale of the Nun's Priest had not been reached when the first instalment was ready, Dryden's version of it accordingly did not appear in the volumes that were published. It was doubtless reserved for its proper place in the volumes that were to follow.

The modernizations of Chaucer in this edition divide themselves into two classes, which may be characterized as representing the school of Dryden and the school of Pope. To the latter belong the versions of Betterton and Grosvenor. To them may be added those of Cobb and Markland. But these last two were scholars, and the habits of the scholar clung to them. It was not in their nature to venture upon liberties with the text which mere men of letters had no hesitation in taking. They consequently adhered pretty closely to the original. They made faithful transcripts of the story, and kept as near to its spirit as could be done by men who had little real appreciation of Chaucer, and apparently very little of poetry. The other two, Betterton and Grosvenor, had abridged their material after the fashion set by Pope. This is only partially the case with the former, but it is to a marked degree true of the latter.

His Summoner's tale does not amount to more than one third of that piece as it is contained in Chaucer. It has, indeed, strictly no right to be called a modernization. Nor was it designed as such originally. It was borrowed by Ogle, not written expressly for his work as were most of the new versions. It first appeared in print in 1733, under the title of 'The Whimsical Legacy,' as a contribution to Eustace Budgell's periodical entitled 'The Bee, or Universal Weekly Pamphlet.'[1] In that the writer is not only particular to term it an imitation, but he went on to add that "it cannot properly be called a translation."

Omission or contraction, as has been intimated, was the general rule with these men when they did not keep close to the original. Outside of this they did their work honestly. If the result was commonplace and tedious, it was because the ability had been denied them to make it otherwise. They have the one merit of not pretending to be more than they were. They introduced occasionally references which Chaucer could not have made because they were to events and practices that were unknown in his time. But for anachronisms like these they could shelter themselves under the authority of Dryden. On the other hand, the versions of Boyse, Brooke, and Ogle were of an ambitious character. Expansion was the rule. Additions, to which Dryden had unhappily given the name of improvements, are the most characteristic marks of their work. All of them were gifted with an unusual ability for making a short story long, and an interesting one tedious. Two of these

[1] No. xxiii., vol. ii., p. 1020.

poets still have remembrance of a vague kind among men. Boyse is one of the most notorious representatives of that literary proletariat of the last century whose members led generally a life of vagabondage and penury, diversified by occasional indulgences in degrading and cheap excesses, and who threatened at one time to develop into an organized band of scribbling Switzers, ready to sell their services to promote or assail any cause and to uphold or stab any reputation. He now owes the fact that he is remembered at all mainly to the praise which was bestowed upon one of his poems by Fielding in his great novel. Henry Brooke is a more distinguished character in every way. He held in his own time no insignificant literary position. Though his plays and poems have now almost passed from memory, his 'Fool of Quality' continues yet to be printed pretty frequently and to be read occasionally.

Between these three—Boyse, Brooke, and Ogle—there was seemingly a contest as to who should receive the palm for wordiness. A certain defence can be made for the one first named. In the account of him given in Cibber's 'Lives of the Poets'[1] he is said to have received threepence for every line he wrote of these versions. As he was always in needy and usually in necessitous circumstances, he had accordingly every pecuniary if not personal inducement to go on diluting his original to the utmost limit of wishi-washiness. The opportunity he certainly did not fail to improve. In the case of the Squire's tale—the only genuine poem of Chaucer he modernized—the six hundred and sixty-two lines of the

[1] Vol. v., p. 174.

original are represented in his version by fourteen hundred and sixty. But comparison of numbers gives little conception of his unfaithfulness to his author or of the riot of language in which he indulged. The incidents of the story merely furnished him a pretext for discoursing upon anything and everything it entered into his head to say; for introducing new sentiments, new facts, and new characters; or for indulging in those sage moral reflections to which men of loose lives and reckless conduct are addicted, as if to make up for the viciousness of their behavior by the exemplariness of their views. All this might be pardoned on the ground that need knows no law, were it not for the fact that Boyse was proud of his work. It is manifest that in his own opinion he had quite outdone his original. He was unwilling to wait for the edition containing his version to appear. In August, 1740, he furnished to the 'Gentleman's Magazine' a specimen in advance of one of his additions, or, as he termed them, improvements. This consisted of the character and speech of Cosroes the Mede. Chaucer fortunately is not responsible for the creation of this personage, nor for anything he is reported to have said.

Boyse, however, was by no means singular in the extent to which he enriched the original with a prodigality of verbiage. The projector of the scheme had, in fact, set him the example. Ogle's version of the Clerk of Oxford's tale extended to two thousand four hundred and twenty-six lines; Chaucer had been enabled to write it in eleven hundred and fifty-six. Even this record was surpassed by Brooke. His version of the Man of Law's tale is in parts a peculiarly impudent performance among

performances all of which are impudent. The thirty-five lines descriptive of the ills of poverty with which it opens are represented in his so-called modernization by one hundred and sixty-eight. Of these it is safe to say that not one has anything but the remotest resemblance to what can be found in the original. The tale itself is proportionally not so bad. Its ten hundred and sixty-four lines are represented by sixteen hundred and forty-four. All these poems, it is to be added, were with one exception turned into heroic couplets, no matter in what measure originally composed. The seven-line stanza, a favorite one with Chaucer, was studiously avoided. The example had been set in the first place by Dryden in his modernization of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' It was faithfully followed, as was almost inevitable at a period when the rymed couplet had become the general favorite. The universality of its adoption makes exceedingly striking the one exception that can be found. The Squire's tale had been written by Chaucer in heroic verse. Boyse, who seems to have been animated by the desire to have his modernization as little like the original as possible, substituted for this measure a ten-line stanza.

Of the literary character of these versions some idea may be gathered from what has already been said. All of them, whether expansions or contractions of the original, subject themselves to one general criticism. The pieces may be of varying length, but they are of uniform dulness. The dulness is of different kinds, to be sure, but it never fails to be the predominant characteristic. From this judgment attempts have sometimes

been made to exempt the modernizations of Boyse and Brooke, especially those of the former. One not familiar with eighteenth-century poetry will be struck at first by a certain smoothness and glitter in the lines, and occasionally by a certain gorgeousness of diction. He may, in consequence, get the impression that these modernizations have not received the full credit to which they are entitled; that while they may not adequately represent Chaucer, they do exhibit poetical power of no inferior grade. But the artificial structure of the versification, the false splendor of the language, cease to impose upon the understanding as soon as they are found to be not even feats of ability, but to be mere tricks of art of which the poetaster of the time succeeded sometimes in getting the mastery as well as the poet. One general criticism can be passed on these versions. They undertook, in the first place, to do something that was not in itself desirable to do. Having undertaken it, they proceeded to do what they undertook in the most undesirable way. Wit and humor were crushed by the mass of irrelevant verbiage under which the sense was loaded down. Pathos naturally vanished from sight. Its very life consists in simplicity of language; and in place of simple language we had here a succession of orotund phrases. For pathos, consequently, was substituted a weak emotion which spent itself in rambling and loquacious speech. These ambitious versions were, indeed, marked by two qualities which, though apparently opposite, are often found in conjunction. They were stilted and they were mean. I have said that by Dryden the gold of Chaucer had been turned into silver. The laborious alchemy of the

eighteenth century went still farther and turned it into lead.

This elaborate attempt at modernizing the 'Canterbury Tales' was not then completed, whatever may have been the original intention. Ogle died in 1746. His project very likely had died before him. The publication of these volumes probably did little harm to Chaucer's fame. Few read them; still fewer found them worth reading. Let us give, in consequence, the credit we can to the eighteenth century. For many years the reputation of the poet rested secure from these assaults, which, however friendly in spirit, were injurious in their influence, so far as they exerted any influence at all. In the meanwhile, knowledge of Chaucer had been making headway. By more and more the discovery continued to be made that it was not a difficult matter to read his lines as he composed them himself. Yet the feeling that had inspired these previous attempts had by no means died out. It was still a belief on the part of a large number that the language in which he wrote was a dead language, or, as it now sometimes began to be put more mildly, a decaying language. To revive him by a modernized version was looked upon by many as being in the nature of a sacred duty. Accordingly, late in the century a man came forward to take up and complete the unfinished work of Ogle. This was the Rev. William Lipscomb. It was in 1792, while he was rector of Westbury in Yorkshire, that he brought out a version of the Pardoner's tale. It was the preliminary achievement of the task he had set before himself. The rest followed in due time. In 1795 three volumes were pub-

lished which contained, with two exceptions, the pieces that had appeared in the edition of 1741, and the eleven additional tales of the original that were in verse. All the poetry of Chaucer's principal work had now been turned into English, easy to understand if not easy to read. The modernization of these additional tales and of the links between them was done by Mr. Lipscomb alone. He also gave a version in current prose of the tale of Melibeus, but did not include the Parson's tale on account, as he tells us, of its tediousness. This shows that he recognized abstractly the existence of such a quality, though he was quite unconscious of the signal example of it that was closest at hand. He threw out, moreover, the Miller's and the Reeve's tale because of their indelicacy. The retention of certain others he justified on the ground that the indecorous passages in them were comparatively few; and even these barriers to their general reception he humbly hoped had been wholly removed. This was true enough of his own versions; but he printed those of Pope without variation.

Like his predecessors, Lipscomb was animated by a noble desire to spread the knowledge of Chaucer among the men of a generation that knew him not. That this was the way to go about it he did not think to question. His attempting it at all proves his confidence in his own fitness for the task. He was a poet of the kind the eighteenth century spawned in profusion. He had obtained in 1772 one of the chancellor's prizes at the University of Oxford for verses written on the beneficial influence of inoculation for small-pox. A success of this sort naturally leads to no exalted anticipation of what he would

accomplish when dealing with the works of a man of genius like Chaucer. Yet anticipation, however lowly, will be exceeded by the humility of the performance. One is not surprised to find his versions dull; he is surprised to find them so very dull. Yet about his modernization as a whole there is a mechanical uniformity, a decency of mediocrity, which makes it almost as difficult to say anything harsh about it as to say anything in its favor. We can see how Boyse, Brooke, and the men of their time might have fancied that their versions were fine productions. It is hard to conceive how any emotion of any sort could have been raised by the dead level of Lipscomb's achievement. He himself was as delightfully ignorant of the literature one would have supposed him to be specially familiar with as with the literature he professed to know. It has already been mentioned that Dryden's version of the Nun's Priest's tale was not included in Ogle's edition. Lipscomb did not make the discovery that such a version existed at all until after he had produced his own. This fact he announced in an apologetic note. It made little or no difference; for readers he had none, save those whose business it was to review the work. These, it is fair to say, bestowed a good deal of commendation upon it. According to them, a complete modernization of the 'Canterbury Tales' was something for which the world had long been waiting with eagerness. Its author was congratulated on having accomplished so satisfactorily what had been so earnestly desired. These were the opinions of the professional critics. The public, much wiser than they, never cared for this version in the slightest. It

was not a work that needed to be suppressed in the interest of the poet; it suppressed itself.

These were the successive steps by which the 'Canterbury Tales' were turned into what was called the refined and classical language of the eighteenth century. It was not, however, the only work of Chaucer that was subjected to this polishing process. The 'House of Fame' has already been mentioned as having been converted by Pope into the 'Temple of Fame.' The change of title largely indicates the change of diction. It was, however, the works that are now generally conceded to be spurious that were the favorites for these specious attempts. The practice began with Dryden's version of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' The 'Complaint of the Black Knight' was modernized in 1718 by the antiquary John Dart, and the 'Court of Love' by Alexander Stopford Catcott, who attained more prominence as a divine than as a poet, but not much prominence in either capacity. His version was published at Oxford in 1717. The seven-line stanza was, according to the usual custom, turned by him into the heroic couplet. The original was also cut down more than one half. But scattered along during the eighteenth century, specimens of modernization, usually on a limited scale, turn up with a fair degree of regularity. Walter Harte, already mentioned so often, put into the English of his time, under the heading 'To my Soul,' the short piece of Chaucer beginning 'Flee from the press.' The character of the Parson as depicted in the general Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales' was a favorite object of assault. It was a theme that inspired a number of so-called poets of the

period. It furnished one of the two imitations attempted by the Rev. William Dunkin, a bard brought into some notice by Chesterfield, who had a gift amounting almost to genius in the discovery of bad writers.' A paraphrase of this same passage in the Prologue can be found as late as 1800 in the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' But all through the eighteenth century the periodical literature contains many poems purporting to owe their existence to Chaucer either in the way of imitation or of modernization. His name, indeed, was not unfrequently assumed when one wished to put forth some verses for which, for any reason, he did not care to take the personal responsibility.

We can concede that the intention of all these versions was praiseworthy. Still the effect on the mind of reading them can hardly be termed exhilarating. Even had it been desirable to modernize Chaucer, the poetic diction of the eighteenth century was the one least fitted as the vehicle of transferrence. We need not make it an object of undistinguishing depreciation. It had certain marked merits of its own. It had, in particular, in the hands of its chief masters the impressiveness of subtle reminiscence of the great classic writers. But in reading it we feel that we are wandering in a land of phrases. We are talking a dialect which nobody ever spoke; we are using words that, even when they appeal to the intellect, rarely touch the heart. The curse of artificial phraseology hangs over it all. Its dwellings are bowers, its laborers are swains, its women are nymphs. From this all-pervading infection of fine language the possession of

[1] See Dunkin's *Poems* (London, 1774), vol. ii., p. 480.

genius did not always enable the poet to escape. Inferiority of execution for one even so endowed was certain if he chose to measure himself with a writer like Chaucer on his own ground. It was impossible to sing the Lord's songs in a strange land. But something worse than inferiority was sure to befall the attempts of a man of ordinary ability to put into a diction always mounted upon stilts the words of the one English poet who is closest to nature, who always said directly what he meant, and who could not fall accidentally into a bit of fine writing without stopping to satirize himself for the mischance. Any modernization of Chaucer in the poetic dialect of the eighteenth century was foredoomed to failure. But its inevitable unfaithfulness to the original, if men honestly tried to reproduce his poetry accurately, was aggravated in many cases by the fact that they did not try so to reproduce it; that they took with it the grossest liberties and added or omitted incidents or ideas at their pleasure.

The prevalence of a practice directly opposite that has shown itself in the present century is one of many indications of the altered attitude of mind that had come to be exhibited towards the poet. The feeling manifested itself somewhat early. It can be seen even in Lipscomb, whose versions are generally faithful if they are tedious. Adherence to the original became, in fact, one test of the value of these modernizations with those who supposed they had any value at all. It is here that the essential distinction exists between the practice of the eighteenth and of the nineteenth century. The former tried to get as far away from Chaucer's language

as possible; the latter tried to keep as near. It has taken a long while to discover that as regards the poet himself it is a matter of little moment what is the extent of the distance which it is thought worth while to preserve. It is the credit of the modernizer that is affected by the course he adopts, and not that of the original author. All eighteenth-century versions of Chaucer were failures. At best they gave a wrong conception of his genius; at worst they gave the impression that he was not possessed of genius at all. After the experience of the last hundred years we can safely go further and say that all versions are destined to be failures. During the present century there have been numerous attempts at modernization, though fortunately some of them have never got beyond the stage of manuscript. The work of three men in particular has gained a good deal of notoriety. Their versions are all that are necessary to be considered before giving an account of the last and most signal enterprise of all. These three are Lord Thurlow, the nephew of the famous chancellor; Wordsworth, and Leigh Hunt.

The first of these was a nobleman who cultivated poetry with more assiduity than success. His name will be found appended to a number of forgotten pieces, scattered up and down the pages of several forgotten magazines belonging to the first quarter of the present century. Short poems of his are also found occasionally in modern anthologies. He was smitten with a love of antiquity which showed itself in imitation of some of our older writers. It was in 1822 that he brought out a modernization of the Knight's tale under the title of

'Arcita and Palemon.' It appeared the same year in a second edition—which seems to have been due to the desire of the noble lord rather than of the public—and with it this time the modernization of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' To most men it would have seemed somewhat venturesome to bring out versions in direct competition with the most popular as well as the only poetic ones that had hitherto been made. But he who had no fear of Chaucer before his eyes was not likely to be seriously disturbed by the ghost of Dryden. Of all the nineteenth-century modernizations these of Thurlow stand in sharpest contrast to those of the eighteenth century. One characteristic all of the latter, however differing in other respects, possessed in common. The aim of those who produced them was to make the versification smooth. The sense of the original was not a matter that gave them the chiefest concern. Their attention was directed largely to the sound. It might or might not mean anything; but it was necessary that it should run glibly off the tongue. The second was that in the translation the exact language of Chaucer should be carefully avoided. This was a result guarded against so zealously that the makers of these versions apparently preferred to resort to the feeblest of paraphrases rather than retain perfectly intelligible and expressive lines in the form in which they came from the author. This was a feeling that animated all the translators who formed themselves upon the model of Dryden and Pope. They might, perhaps, admit that any change must be change for the worse; but to alteration even for the worse they seemed to feel themselves driven by

a sort of irresistible necessity. They occasionally let us know what pains they took to make a poetical expression unpoetical, or a vigorous one weak. As late as 1804, for example, a volume in imitation of Dryden was brought out by Richard Wharton under the title of 'Fables.'[1] It consisted of poems which were renderings into heroic verse of select parts of Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto. The English poet is represented by a modernization of the Franklin's tale. For the literary merit of the version, it is sufficient to observe that it is worthy of a place in Lipscomb. Still, it can be said for the writer that he knew a good thing when he saw it, though he did not know enough to adopt it. In the opening of this tale Chaucer points out the impossibility of love continuing to exist where it is made to feel the constraint of authority. His words are as follows:

> "When mastery cometh, the God of Love anon
> Beateth his wings, and farewell! he is gone!" 38.

Wharton appreciated fully the original, and pointed out how forcibly the immediate effect of the exercise of authority is conveyed by the use of the passive 'is gone.' One might therefore naturally suppose that he would have been glad to adopt the couplet exactly as it was written. His enthusiasm, however, did not lead him to take so extreme a step. It did induce him, as he tells us, "to preserve as much of Chaucer's line as was consistent with modern idiom." What sacrifices consistency with modern idiom required may be gathered from these

[1] *Fables: consisting of Select Parts from Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto.* Imitated in English heroic verse by Richard Wharton, Esq., M. P. (London, 1804).

following words, in which the extract just cited appears in his version:

> "For love, if either strive to rule alone,
> Extends his wings, and farewell! he is gone."

The example is worth quoting, as it gives a pretty clear conception of the sort of skimmed milk that was dished up to the eighteenth-century reader as a specimen of Chaucer's poetry.

In both these particulars Thurlow followed the opposite course. He aimed to make his versification irregular, we might say rough. This he did, not because he lacked the ability to make it smooth, but because he fancied that by so doing he was giving it a likeness to the vigor and simplicity of the original. He was clearly a full believer in the theory that there was no regularity in Chaucer's metre; that his lines consisted of no definite number of syllables; and that he who sought to find exactness in them was looking for something that did not exist. In this matter he adopted from choice the view which his predecessors had adopted from ignorance. It was consequently a natural inference from these doctrines that the ruggeder the versification the nearer it must be to what the eighteenth century called the homely strains of the original. Conviction can hardly fail to force itself upon the reader that Thurlow designedly made his verse as uneven as possible, while preserving a sort of rude metrical harmony. The lines are exceedingly irregular. Tried by strict rules, some of them err by deficiency, others by redundance. They can occasionally be found consisting of as many as four-

teen syllables. There is, besides, no uniformity of accent; there is, indeed, sedulous care manifested to avoid it. Perfect lines do occasionally occur. There are many such in Chaucer, even with the modern pronunciation. The result is that no one capable of reading can manage to mismetre them, no matter how perverse may be the theory that has got possession of his mind. As this particular modernizer followed his original pretty closely, he could not, therefore, help at times writing smooth and regular lines; though he doubtless felt in every such instance that he was somehow deviating from the noble simplicity of the early poet.

It is almost needless to say that Thurlow failed woefully. To be rugged is one thing, to be feeble is another; to be both feeble and rugged is a distinction which it seems to have been reserved for him to achieve. His versions had the bad qualities that belong to different bad styles. The affectation of being unaffected is, perhaps, more disagreeable than deliberate attempts to be grandiose. There is a literary hypocrisy in the former which cannot exist where men are openly striving after the ornate. Thurlow suffered, too, from a lack of familiarity with the archaic diction which he tried at times to utilize. As a result, he contributed to the English language some new words of which it has not yet felt the need, and transferred some of its old words to new parts of speech. He had, moreover, crude ideas as to what constituted simplicity. In particular, he had not learned that effectiveness of utterance can never be secured by a prodigal use of exclamations and exclamation-points. Not satisfied with Chaucer's 'alas!' and

'welaway!' he indulged in a profusion of 'ah's!' and 'O's!' and even in 'ha! ha's!' uttered not in sport, but in the spirit of the war-horse in Job. The consequence is that these perpetual provocatives to emotion pall upon the mind. Accordingly, what at first promised to be entertaining, because it was ridiculous, feels the influence of the general atmosphere, and becomes nothing but dull. This criticism is much truer of the rendering of the Knight's tale than of that of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' There was an epic dignity about the former which was necessarily belittled by these painful strivings after simplicity which often approached silliness, and sometimes exhibited literary vulgarity. For there are places in which the version of Thurlow does not even creep; it fairly crawls.

The other versions to be considered were the work of two men—Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt—whose feelings towards Chaucer were almost reverential. This did not prevent them from repeating the old experiment, and adding their names to the list of failures. The versions of Wordsworth were composed in 1801, but none of them were published till many years after. The first one to be printed was the tale of the Prioress. This came out in 1820, in the volume containing the sonnets upon the river Duddon. In a prefatory note, Wordsworth described the method according to which the modernization had been produced. He had allowed himself, he said, no further deviations from the original than were necessary for the fluent reading and instant understanding of the author. He retained, besides, the ancient accent in a few conjunctions such as *alsó* and

*alwáy*, from a conviction that such sprinklings of antiquity would be admitted by persons of taste to have a graceful accordance with the subject.

Wordsworth's version is certainly very close to the original, the precise language of which it frequently adopts. The experiment is therefore all the more striking. The changes, slight as they are, are just sufficient to turn pathetic poetry into prosaic prose. The tale of the Prioress is by no means one that displays Chaucer's power at its highest. But the strains of tenderness and of simplicity running through it are blended so artistically that alteration of any sort is inevitably for the worse. The intellectual shortcomings of Wordsworth, the prosaic quality of his mind when not working under the influence of high inspiration, and his incapacity at such times to distinguish between simplicity and simpleness, unfitted him to be an interpreter of Chaucer, even were we to assume that Chaucer stood in need of an interpreter. Wayward and paradoxical as are many of Landor's judgments, few that are familiar with the two poets will disagree with his dictum that Wordsworth could no more have written the 'Canterbury Tales' than he could 'Paradise Lost.' His characteristics are fully displayed in his rendering of the tale of the Prioress. There is nothing in his version to indicate that a man of genius had anything whatever to do with its production. What he did could have been accomplished as well by any one possessed of literary taste and of ordinary skill in versification. In this respect his work stands at an immense distance from that of Dryden; for while the modernizations of the latter are

inferior to the original, they have value of their own as independent poems. This is something that can never be said either of the versions of Wordsworth already mentioned or of those that will be mentioned farther on. Starting from an opposite quarter, he had arrived at the same point which was reached by the men of the eighteenth century who had devoted themselves to this same work. Nobody would now read his modernizations with the idea of getting a conception of Chaucer. Nor are they of sufficient interest or merit to be read for themselves.

Wordsworth also made a version of the Manciple's tale which he never published, not because the original poem was indelicate, but because the subject was. As it turns upon the sufficiently well-worn topic of a man slaying his wife for her unfaithfulness, delicacy can be deemed in this instance to have fairly passed over into the region of prudery. There is, however, nothing to regret in his decision. As poems, his versions are inferior to those of Leigh Hunt, who deviates much farther from the language of the original, but in some respects remains more faithful to its spirit. It must be confessed that this is a result that could hardly have been expected beforehand. There is an occasional jauntiness, not to say friskiness, about Leigh Hunt's style which is grossly unsuited to the rendering of an author like Chaucer, who, in his most humorous passages, never forgets his dignity. But Hunt's admiration for the early poet was tempered with awe. This was usually sufficient to put restraint upon his expression. He sometimes, indeed—especially in his late version of the Par-

doner's tale—resorts to tricks of speech, to slang, to comparisons and illustrations which are utterly foreign to the quiet but elevated earnestness with which the story is told in the original. Still, they are not numerous enough to jar perceptibly upon the feelings. To some extent, too, they are counterbalanced by an ease and freedom of movement which reminds the reader remotely at least of the great original. The awe, sincerely felt by Hunt, was curiously exemplified in other ways besides that of mere expression. It was in 1823, in the periodical called 'The Liberal,' that his first version of one of Chaucer's productions appeared under the title of 'Cambus Khan.'[1] This was the Squire's tale, a poem which, partly because of its character, partly because of its unfinished state, seems always to have exercised a singular fascination over many men of letters. Boyse's rendering of it had so little resemblance to the original that it could hardly be expected to satisfy even those who believed in modernization. Certainly as early as 1804 an entirely new version had been produced; and, though it never excited much attention, it was a fairly creditable production of the not very creditable kind to which it belonged.[2] It had the merit of being faithful. But a close rendering was not the project with which Hunt started out. He had the intention of using his knowledge of Eastern stories to complete, after a fashion of his own, the fragment that Chaucer had left. With this idea he finished the first canto, introducing

[1] *The Liberal, Verse and Prose from the South* (London, 1823), vol. ii., p. 317.

[2] It appeared in the *Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry* for 1804. It may have been composed and even printed long before.

into it certain sentiments and incidents for which he himself was solely responsible. Then, as he confessed, his courage failed him. Frightened at his own audacity, he left half told his own rendering of the half-told tale, which still remains unapproached and unapproachable, as it came from the hands of the great master. At a later period he modernized the Pardoner's tale under the title of 'Death and the Ruffians.' When he republished the two, he did it with a sort of apologetic preface. He disclaimed the idea of having composed either of his versions as a substitute for the original. "Never for an instant," he said, "did the preposterous idea of emulation enter my head." He had written them in the hope that they might act as incitements to the study of the great author from whom they were taken. This is a delusion which has been an effective motive in the production of many of these versions. They could only be forgiven, indeed, on the ground that they exerted such an influence. Yet even the charity which hopeth as well as endureth all things can hardly have persuaded itself that many were ever inspired to make the acquaintance of Chaucer in consequence of reading these modernizations.

The practice, indeed, though doomed to death as soon as men had generally the ability to compare the translation with the original, continued to be a favorite exercise of those who combined great theoretical appreciation of Chaucer with limited knowledge of his language. More than one attempt of this kind has been made that has never been published. Others have not been so fortunate in this respect. In 'Blackwood's Magazine' for

May, 1837, the Clerk's tale is, for instance, again retold in heroic verse. It is one of those respectable pieces of poetic manufacture which reputable periodicals are regularly in the habit of printing, but no one, unless under some special provocation, ever thinks of reading. This piece is anonymous, and it is neither bad enough nor good enough to excite curiosity as to the name of its author. The case is quite different with the more pretentious work that now comes up for consideration. This was nothing less than a renewal in the nineteenth century of the scheme to modernize Chaucer on a grand scale, that had failed so signally in the eighteenth. It is the last of these attempts, and for some reasons much the most interesting of all. Every one admitted at the time it was undertaken that no efforts of this kind in the past had succeeded. They neither conveyed the spirit of the poet to those who knew him, nor excited among those who knew him not the disposition to make his acquaintance. Yet the lesson of these repeated failures had not yet been learned. In 1841—precisely one hundred years after Ogle's version had appeared—was published at London a single volume entitled 'The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernized.' This was the initial outcome of an elaborately devised scheme to bring the works of the early poet to the knowledge of all men through the agency of a version suited to their supposed capacity or incapacity. It was also the final outcome. This fact indicates that the project was not remarkable for its success. Still, it was remarkable for the character of the persons concerned in it. Among them were some of the most eminent men of letters then living. The

list of contributors to this one volume includes the two men — Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt — whose independent work in the same field has just been described. Besides these, Mrs. Browning, then Miss Barrett, was associated in the undertaking, as was also Lord Houghton, then Richard Monkton Milnes, though he seems to have furnished nothing.

For the continuation, moreover, extensive arrangements had been planned. It was intended to ask the co-operation of Tennyson, Talfourd, Browning, Bulwer, Mr. and Mrs. Cowden Clarke, and Mary Howitt. Whether a request to this effect was actually made to each and all of these persons, there are no means of ascertaining. Still, we are told that every man of letters who was invited to take part in the project consented cordially, with the single exception of Walter Savage Landor. He had seen the futility as well as the folly of the attempt the moment his attention had been called to it. As might be expected from his character, he had no hesitation in expressing his opinion with distinctness and energy. To the first request he received to join in the enterprise he replied that "as many people read Chaucer as are fit to read him." These were words susceptible of a double meaning. They were naturally taken in the sense they were not intended. Landor, therefore, wrote another letter to set himself right, but characteristically exhibited in the same breath his admiration and affection for one poet and his dislike of another. Chaucer, he remarked, was worth a score of Spensers. This was an opinion he was in the habit of expressing. The latter author he had never liked; but his appreciation

of the former had grown steadily with years. Earlier in life he had taken the ground that Chaucer was a passably good novelist, but hardly to be called a poet. Later he thought him a poet, "whose invention, variety, and spirit are equalled by Shakspeare and Milton only." In this second letter, defining his position, he adhered unhesitatingly to his original opinion about the valuelessness of modernization. "Pardon me," he said, "if I say I would rather see Chaucer quite alone, in the dew of his sunny morning, than with twenty clever gentlefolks about him, arranging his shoe-strings and buttoning his doublet. I like even his language. I will have no hand in breaking his dun but rich-painted glass to put in (if clearer) much thinner panes."

Views like these, however, were not the ones generally entertained. While the initial volume was going through the press, we are told in its Introduction that the project received demonstrations of the utmost sympathy from many high quarters at home and abroad. That persons possessing the cultivation and ability of those already mentioned were willing to go into an enterprise of this character is pretty conclusive proof of how little, after all, was really known of Chaucer. At any rate, that such men could seriously believe that the process in which they were engaged, or to which they had given their concurrence, was one by which he could be made better known and appreciated is assuredly satisfactory proof of how little they comprehended the conditions under which his fame or influence could be extended. Back of this scheme there was genuine admiration of the poet; there was enthusiasm in the attempt; the one

thing that was lacking was intelligence. This looks like a particularly hard saying to utter about a number of the most intelligent persons then living, some of whom possessed genius of their own as well as admiration for the genius of Chaucer. Yet there seems no escape from the conclusion. The intelligence they possessed was not the right sort of intelligence. It was not of the kind which could deal with the problem they set out to solve. A different kind of it, indeed, would have shown them that the problem was insoluble. Nor was it merely knowledge of the conditions that was lacking. In many instances, as we shall have occasion to see, it was knowledge of the meaning of the very language they undertook to explain. There is nothing that proves the greater familiarity with Chaucer that has come about during the past fifty years than the fact that nobody, occupying the same relative literary position, could now say the things that were then said, or think the things that were then thought.

The volume published was not limited to the 'Canterbury Tales.' The intention was to give as wide a view as possible of the many-sided character of Chaucer's genius. The Introduction assures us, indeed, that none of his minor works had ever been made known to the public even in a paraphrase, with the single exception of 'The Flower and the Leaf,' which Dryden had modernized. These latter were therefore to be fully represented. Accordingly, of the thirteen pieces contained in the volume, six only were taken from the 'Canterbury Tales.' These were the general Prologue, with the exception of the last one hundred and seventy-eight

lines, and the Reeve's and the Franklin's tale, with their respective introductions, all of which were modernized by Richard Hengist Horne, who held the position of editor; the tale of the Manciple, of the Friar, and of the Squire—the last an entirely new and much more faithful version—by Leigh Hunt; and the tale of Sir Thopas, with its prologue and part of its epilogue, by an anonymous writer who shrouded himself under both ends of the alphabet as Z. A. Z. More distinguished contributors appeared for the portions of the work not taken from the 'Canterbury Tales.' Wordsworth sent a version of twenty-four stanzas from the fifth book of 'Troilus and Cressida,' and also of the doubtful poem of 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale.' Horne tells us, moreover, that the rendering of 'The Flower and the Leaf,' which is nominally ascribed to Powell, was virtually Wordsworth's, in consequence of the labor of revision and rewriting to which it was subjected at his hands. Miss Barrett modernized 'Anelida and Arcite.' The two remaining contributors—Thomas Powell and Robert Bell—were much less distinguished. They were a pair of versifiers who, so far as poetry was concerned, really belonged to the eighteenth century, but had somehow got into the nineteenth. They would have been in their proper place contributing to Ogle's edition of 1741. 'The Flower and the Leaf' and the stories of Ariadne, Philomene, and Phyllis, in the 'Legend of Good Women,' were modernized by the former; the 'Complaint of Mars' and the 'Complaint of Venus' by the latter. Besides this, there was an Introduction of about one hundred pages by the editor, and a life of Chaucer by Leonhard Schmitz, which

was particularly careful to retain every misstatement of fact that the craziest conjectures of previous biographers had succeeded in imposing upon the world as actual incidents in the career of the poet.

The story of this undertaking has been told pretty fully by its editor.[1] Who was its original inspirer is not definitely known. Horne thought, but did not venture to assert positively, that it was set on foot by Wordsworth. In this he was mistaken. Wordsworth, indeed, says that it originated in what he attempted with the tale of the Prioress; but he was so far from making any pretense to having been the projector of the scheme that he wrote to a correspondent that he had no further connection with it than what consisted in giving it a present of his two contributions. The editorship, however, was offered to him in the first place. But he was too old, and he was too far away. Leigh Hunt, as the one next in seniority, was then proposed. There seems, indeed, to have been a vague impression that the older a man was, the better qualified he must necessarily be to read and interpret so old an author as Chaucer. But he also declined. In the meanwhile, several of the modernizations had been sent to Wordsworth for examination, and one of these—a version of the Franklin's tale made by Horne—had been spoken of by him as being "as well done as any lover of Chaucer's poetry need or can desire." This astounding criticism decided the matter. It was settled that Horne should exercise editorial supervision over the work which, to use his own words, was to

[1] In *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning addressed to Richard Hengist Horne, with Comments upon Contemporaries* (London, 1877), vol. i., p. 95 ff.

give to the world "a true yet polished modernization of the Father of English Poetry." In an evil hour, he tells us, he consented to undertake the task, little dreaming of the waste of time, annoyance, vexation, and mortification he was to bring upon himself; little knowing, we should say, the folly of what he was attempting, and his own incompetence to do even poorly what it was impossible for any one to do well.

Most of the versions in this volume kept very close to the words as well as to the general sense of the original. In some cases neither the language nor the ideas of Chaucer were preserved; but this was not so much due to design as to incapacity. There was no attempt at expansion, and very little addition of new sentiments or new images, the so-called improvements of the eighteenth century. Nor was there a disposition to omit or to contract. Only such passages were discarded as were avowedly left out on the score of delicacy or of digressions that interfered with the progress of the story. In many places the very lines of the original were introduced. So far so good, it may be said. But to the inevitable consequence that any alteration would be alteration for the worse is to be added a frequent misunderstanding of the meaning of words, which leads to the conclusion that the modernizers had in general a noble disdain of any aid that could have been received from so common a work as the glossary of Tyrwhitt. That editor, indeed, is mentioned but twice, and much of the information he brought to light was carefully ignored. It is interesting, in consequence, to read the conflict of views that took place between persons whose minds,

while filled with enthusiasm and admiration, were untrammelled by any prejudices that sprang from exact knowledge. Horne has taken the pains to give us an idea of the character of the correspondence that was carried on, and in some instances has furnished us with its very words. In particular, he has preserved a specimen of the printed proofs that passed between him and one of the contributors, with the remarks and corrections that were inscribed upon its margin. A veritable curiosity of literature it was in his eyes; and such it was, though not in the sense he understood it. He looked upon these comments and criticisms with a melancholy pride. A few of them he recorded, because they afforded some slight notion of the annoyance and trouble connected with the editorship, but more especially of the literary, philological, and archæological contests that attended the production of the work. To him these contests showed the admirable earnestness of the translators. To us they show rather their extraordinary ignorance of the poet's language, and their utter unconsciousness of their ignorance. For a single illustration it is evident that the Gransoun, whom Chaucer in his 'Complaint of Venus' styled the flower of those who write poetry in France, was originally understood by Robert Bell to mean 'grandson,' and had been so rendered. Misapprehensions of this sort were largely set right by the collective wisdom of the persons engaged in the undertaking while the volume was in course of preparation. This is something to be regretted. Had the ignorance of each been allowed to have its perfect work, the book would always have had a peculiar inter-

est of its own, though not quite the sort of interest that the projectors of the scheme anticipated.

There were, however, a sufficient number of inaccuracies, to put it mildly, that were left undisturbed to gratify the longings of the most fault-finding of critics. The work from one end to the other was in truth a succession of blunders. These were heralded by a piece of carelessness exhibited at the very beginning of the book. Wordsworth, in forwarding his contributions, had enclosed an extract from Drayton, celebrating the greatness of Chaucer. This was printed in full on the title-page. It was, however, credited to him who had sent it instead of him who had written it. This, though an unlucky, was not an unnatural, mistake; but it appropriately led the way to a series of errors that could only have been made by ignorance that was unusually wide-reaching. In the number and variety of these, precedence, as is just, must be given to the editor. It is hard to say whether his own renderings or his criticism of the renderings of others is fuller of misunderstanding and mistake. With the opinions expressed in his Introduction I have nothing to do. But there is hardly a statement of fact found in it that is not either itself wholly an error or characterized by some error of detail. Many of his assertions are what might be expected from one who, as late as 1877, in deploring Landor's refusal to join this company of poetical adventurers, attributed the fact that Chaucer continued to be unread to "the true but narrow devotion of the best men on the black-letter side, and their resistance to all attempts to melt the obsolete language and form it into modern moulds."

Certain elementary facts Horne had never succeeded in mastering. It is plain from several of his remarks that all his life he seriously entertained the impression that black-letter was a period in the history of the English tongue, instead of the name of a particular method of writing and printing the characters of the alphabet. His Introduction, after giving vent to the usual wail about how little Chaucer was read, announced as the remedy for this deplorable neglect of the poet that people must be given something of his to read which he did not write himself. This was the way to make him known and loved of all men. He went on then to furnish information as extraordinary as his opinions. Those who are best acquainted with how much has been accomplished during the past twenty years in the elucidation of Chaucer are the most painfully aware of how much still remains to be accomplished. From this Introduction they will learn, however, that, as long ago as 1841, everything had been done for his works in the collation of texts that could be desired; that ample and erudite notes and glossaries had been furnished to explain his meaning; that paraphrases of all sorts had been made; that, in fact, everything had been done for him except to make him intelligible to the general reader. To verify this statement, Horne indulged in some criticisms upon the versions previously made. These, if they proved nothing else, made clear that to the special reader Chaucer was as unintelligible as he was to the general. His censures of others were, to be sure, just enough in themselves. They would have furnished little ground for exception if he had not made the mistake of fortify-

ing his position by examples. He attacked Markland, for instance, because in his version of the Friar's tale he had omitted one striking image. The early poet had pictured the restless curiosity of the Summoner in the following words:

> "This Summoner, that was as full of jangles,
> As full of venom be these wariangles,
> And ever inquiring upon everything." 109–111.

The last line refers, of course, to the Summoner. It was understood by Mr. Horne to refer to the wariangle, a bird of uncertain identity, but sometimes defined as a woodpecker. The misconception is followed by this choice morsel of criticism. "The idea," he writes, "thus presented to the imagination of the busy creature passing from branch to branch, with his tapping inquiry and his curious prying bill, is certainly one of those wonderfully happy thoughts seldom found in any other writer except Shakspeare." The editor attributed Markland's omission of this happy thought to indisposition on his part to take the trouble to study the passage. It was an aversion to labor which he could have imitated with advantage. It is by reading such criticisms as these that one learns to appreciate of what incalculable benefit laziness has been to the world. This is but one example of numerous mistakes that can be found scattered up and down the hundred pages of this Introduction. Even poor Lipscomb, who had carefully excluded on the ground of its immorality the very Reeve's tale which Horne himself modernized, and who had toned down everything that he thought could offend taste, was soundly scored for his grossness and vulgarity.

It is, however, in his versions that Horne showed most strikingly his incapacity for understanding an author, knowledge of whom he was seeking to impart to others. There is more in this than the mere ignorance of the meanings of obsolete words or obsolete significations, which a consultation of Tyrwhitt's glossary would have dispelled at once. His modernizations, especially that of the general Prologue, will often fill the mind of the reader with uneasy apprehensions as to whether he himself has not, after all, made a mistake in supposing that he had become acquainted with his native tongue. I cite a few instances out of many to illustrate both points. In the description of the Prioress in the original, the statement is made that "it pained her"—that is, that 'she took pains'—to imitate the manners of the court. In the modernization the phrase just mentioned is interpreted in accordance with its present signification. We are informed that it gave her pain to imitate the manners of the court, thus completely falsifying the sense of the passage. Chaucer, again, had said that in the spring-time palmers went to seek strange strands—a very natural thing to do. In Horne's versions countries and seacoasts are confounded, and we are told that palmers set out to wander through strange strands. *Catel*, again, which in Chaucer means 'property,' 'capital,' and never 'cattle,' was rendered by Horne in several senses, not one of which was the true one. In one place it is translated by 'harvest,' in another by 'herd,' and in still another by 'kine.' The last occurs in the account given of the worldly means of the members of the guilds, men who were not likely to be largely interested in the breed

of domestic animals. These same persons, it is to be added, were represented in the original as clad in the livery of a great fraternity; in the modernization they appear "with a grave fraternity inspired," whatever these words may signify. This misconception of meaning, or failure to express it, sometimes assumes an almost grotesque character. Chaucer, in referring to the straitened circumstances of the Clerk of Oxford, says:

"Full threadbare was his overest courtepy." 290.

The poverty of the original becomes destitution of a peculiarly painful sort in the modern version. A more limited supply of outer garments cannot well be imagined than is depicted in such a rendering as the following:

"His uppermost short cloak was a bare thread."

I have singled out Horne for comment partly because he was the editor of the volume, partly because, as historian of the undertaking—so far as it had a history—he remained to the last a firm believer in this method of extending the knowledge and reputation of Chaucer. A few years before his death he contributed to a London magazine[1] a modernized version of the poet's ballade entitled the 'Complaint to his Purse,' and of the famous description of the Temple of Mars contained in the Knight's tale. The former is not of sufficient merit to suffer much harm from any rendering. Still, it is interesting to notice that in each one of its three verses Horne succeeded in grossly misunderstanding, or at least in misinterpreting, the sense. The second mod-

[1] *Temple Bar* for March and October, 1878.

ernization, like Wordsworth's version of the tale of the Prioress, is only of value for the illustration it furnishes of the slightness of the change required in order to reduce the highest poetry to the level of commonplace. It is well to make clear that ignorance of the poet's language, which had been at the foundation of these attempts in the eighteenth century, continued still to be their predominating characteristic in the nineteenth. For Horne was not solely responsible for his own renderings which are found in this volume. His version of the Prologue, full as it was of gross blunders, was read in proof by both Miss Barrett and Leigh Hunt, and was declared by Wordsworth to be well done. In criticising the skill displayed in it, we get a fair conception of the degree of knowledge that was brought to bear upon this enterprise. It will fully justify the apparently harsh criticism that was made some pages previous, that it was not enthusiasm that was lacking in the undertaking, but intelligence. Nor was this all. The license of versification in which the modernizers indulged themselves was frequently of a kind that the poet of a so-called barbarous age would never have tolerated for a moment. Leigh Hunt, in fact, protested vainly against such rymes as *arch* and *porch*, *blood* and *mad*, which Horne used and defended. The latter had no difficulty in showing that the former was guilty of atrocities of his own. Yet the worst case of license to be found in the volume was the work of a person of greater genius than either of the two. Chaucer, in the opening of the poem of 'Anelida and Arcite,' tells us that he takes the story from the Latin, and

in the following lines invokes the muse of lyric poetry, that

> "Singest with voice memorial in the shade,
> Under the laurer[1] which that may not fade,
> And do[2] that I my ship to haven win,
> First follow I Stace, and after him Corinne."

The last two lines were thus rendered by Miss Barrett:

> "Now grant my ship that some smooth haven win her,
> I follow Statius first, and then Corinna."

A ryme of this kind sets the teeth on edge of an admirer of Chaucer. What would have been its effect upon Chaucer himself?

There is no question that the projectors of this modernization planned it, as they declared, in all sincerity and reverent admiration. They themselves were satisfied with the way it had been done. They fancied that on the whole they had accomplished worthily a noble task. Wordsworth, indeed, had not been altogether pleased with some things that had characterized the undertaking. He had protested at the outset against admitting anything that savored of coarseness and indelicacy. For this reason he had not been willing to place his version of the Manciple's tale at the disposal of the editor. It was not itself offensive, but it trenched upon dangerous ground. He was particularly annoyed by the fact that the Reeve's tale was included. This he felt to be something intolerable. Whatever may be thought of his view upon this point, no one can deny the correctness of his opinion that Horne, by the neces-

[1] Laurel. [2] Cause.

sity he lay under of softening down the incidents, had killed the spirit and special humor of the original. Still, in spite of the things to which he took exception, he did not withhold his approbation. "So great," he wrote, "is my admiration of Chaucer's genius, and so profound my reverence for him as an instrument in the hands of Providence for spreading the light of literature through his native land, that notwithstanding the defects and faults in this publication, I am glad of it as a means for making many acquainted with the original who would otherwise be ignorant of everything about him but his name." Miss Barrett was far more enthusiastic. She anticipated the judgment of the public with confidence. "If people," she wrote, "are not (say what they please) delighted with this volume, this breathing of sweet souths over the bank of deathless violets, there can be no room for delight in their souls."

There was this justification for these feelings, that had such a work been produced a hundred years earlier by a band of writers nearly all of them possessed of reputation and several of them possessed of genius, it would have been hailed with acclamation as a positive contribution to English literature, and as a positive improvement upon the original. But this was the middle of the nineteenth century, and not of the eighteenth. During the time that had gone by, men had been running to and fro, and knowledge had been increased. The coolness, not to call it contempt, with which this volume was received was one of the healthiest signs of the genuine interest that had begun to be taken in the poet, and the genuine advance in appreciation of him

that had been made. There were plenty of men to point out the blunders that had been committed, the misapprehensions of meaning that abounded, and the general feebleness and occasional inanity with which the meaning, when understood, had been expressed. There was, indeed, a manifestation of feeling almost in the nature of resentment exhibited at the treatment to which the poet had been subjected. The admirers of the book were mainly limited to its contributors. The second volume, which had been projected, seems never even to have been begun.

## III.

THE account given in the preceding section of the imitations and modernizations of Chaucer's works has been a long one. Were it not for the light they cast upon the views entertained about the poet at different periods, they could hardly be thought to deserve the attention and space they have received, in spite of the many famous names that have been connected with their production. There is nothing more singular about their history than the tenacity with which those concerned in these renderings have clung to the belief that by their versions they were doing a service to the memory of Chaucer. To some extent they doubtless made him better known. But it was rarely, if ever, in a way to be admired. Even the best of these modernizations had no enduring vitality as compared with the original. Their own lease of life expired with the taste of the age that begot them—a taste which preferred the 'Henry and Emma' of Prior to the ballad of the 'Nut-Brown Maid.' It was not by illegitimate methods of this kind that interest in the writings of the poet was to be revived. That could only be the result of the study of his works as he wrote them, and not as some one else rewrote them. The eighteenth century shows in this matter a decided advance over the seventeenth. It can

be seen not only in the increased number of editions, but in critical estimates that were not in every case mere echoes of the past, but independent exercises of mental activity. There was then, to be sure, far more outspoken depreciation of the early poet than in the century preceding; but this was largely due to the fact that there was fuller appreciation. Chaucer was gradually becoming something more than a name. Hence his pretensions were scrutinized with a caution and attacked with a severity they would never have met with had he still continued to be nominally admired without being read at all.

Much of this increased interest was undoubtedly due to Dryden. So great was his critical authority, especially with the generation that succeeded him, that few were disposed to deny outright any dictum of his, however much it might disagree with their own opinions. The praise which he had bestowed upon Chaucer in the preface to the 'Fables' was reinforced in the poetical dedication of the Knight's tale to the Duchess of Ormond, with which the verse contained in the volume opened. In the first paragraph he put the English author by the side of Homer and Virgil in the following lines:

> "The bard who first adorned our native tongue
> Tuned to his British lyre this ancient song:
> Which Homer might without a blush rehearse,
> And leaves a doubtful palm in Virgil's verse:
> He matched their beauties where they most excel;
> Of love sung better, and of arms as well."

If we can trust Dryden's words, as already quoted, his

preference of Chaucer to Ovid would irritate the common judgment. We can therefore imagine the state of mind in which the learned world would be thrown by his placing the early poet on a level with Homer and Virgil. As a general rule, they bore with it patiently. His praise was looked upon in the light of a rhetorical exaggeration, and no more to be taken seriously than his belief in the existence in any given case of the abilities and virtues with which he liberally endowed the men to whom he dedicated his works. The view that came to be generally entertained of the reason that led him to commend Chaucer was formulated by Joseph Trapp in the course of lectures he delivered as professor of poetry in the University of Oxford. This was to the effect that Dryden was in the habit of giving utterance to critical opinions which were designed to help forward the particular undertaking that he had in hand. The proceeding is not so unusual on the part of writers generally as to render it necessary to make such conduct in his case the subject of special animadversion. This weighty judgment had, however, the fortune to be adopted by Dr. Johnson, and to be repeated by Walter Scott. It hence attained a vogue to which it was not entitled either by its own merits or by the merits of its originator. Trapp was the author of some of the stupidest occasional verses that can be found in the stupidest miscellanies that were brought out in the early part of the eighteenth century. His main distinction, however, consists in having turned into some of the worst English in the world some of the world's greatest poetry. We need not wonder that this representative of a narrow and pe-

dantic culture, which dubbed itself liberal, should have been struck with a feeling akin to horror at Dryden's ardent expressions of admiration for an author whom he himself neither knew about nor wanted to know about, nor could have appreciated if he had known about, or that he should have felt called upon in the line of duty to rebuke the foremost man of letters of the former generation for the profanation of criticism which his comparison of the English poet to Homer and Virgil involved.

The respect paid at that time to Dryden's authority was too great, however, to be overborne by the united heaviness of all the pedants of the age. Men would naturally be affected by his lofty estimate of any author, even though they might look upon his praise as grossly exaggerated. The imitations and modernizations which have already been recounted are of themselves ample evidence of the influence he exerted in this particular instance. The attention that was paid to the early poet may have been to a large extent a fashion. It may have had little root in genuine knowledge, and therefore in genuine appreciation. Certainly its tone is often not so much that of admiration for Chaucer as of admiration of itself for condescending to concern itself with the garrulous, childlike, simple-hearted versifier of a barbarous age. Still, there was familiarity, even if it was not intelligent familiarity. The references to the poet often indicate, indeed, that more interest attached to his name than to anything he wrote. With most men of letters knowledge of his productions was apparently limited to the 'Canterbury Tales;' though, besides the instances

mentioned already, Prior, in his poem of 'The Turtle and Sparrow,' makes an allusion to the 'Parliament of Fowls.' One singular exhibition of this revived interest about Chaucer, though rather about the man than the poet, can be found in a dramatic production based to some extent upon passages contained in his greatest work. This was a comedy written by Gay, and entitled 'The Wife of Bath.' In it, on its original representation, Chaucer was the principal hero. The piece was brought out at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in May, 1713, and ran about three nights. The little success it met was full as much as it deserved. It was a play of a thoroughly vulgar character, whether looked at from the moral or the literary point of view. The heroine, whom the poet is represented as winning by working upon her superstitious beliefs, is too great a fool to be endured even among the numberless inanities that crowd the realm of fiction. This comedy, rewritten and a good deal altered, was revived at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in January, 1730, but met with the same fate as on its original appearance.

The critical estimate given by Pope shows, however, keen appreciation. He was in a sense true to the judgment of his great predecessor, and expressed his admiration as unreservedly as he, if not quite so heartily. He is represented by Spence as declaring that he read Chaucer with as much pleasure as almost any other English poet. "He is," he said, "a master of manners, of description, and the first tale-teller in the tongue in the true enlivened natural way." There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this utterance any more than

there is to deny its acumen. Yet in one of the most highly finished of Pope's productions there occurs a line which might fairly seem to imply that he almost resented the attention which the father of English poetry was beginning to receive. The work to which reference is made is the 'Imitation,' that appeared in 1737, of the epistle that Horace addressed to Augustus Cæsar. It is itself a review of English literature from the standpoint of the former half of the eighteenth century. It expresses clearly and forcibly the critical estimates of the school of which the writer was the great representative as well as exponent. In this brilliant piece, Pope, following his model, inveighs—to our eyes somewhat unnecessarily—against the disposition, which he asserts or assumes to be prevalent, to depreciate the worth of living writers, and to exalt the reputation of the dead at their expense. "Chaucer's worst ribaldry," he instanced, "is learned by rote." If Chaucer wrote ribaldry at all, the remark came with a peculiarly ill grace from one who had dragged a portion of it from an obscurity in which it was known mainly to scholars, and made it accessible to all in a modernized version. It is hardly necessary to say that there is no justification for the hostile criticism either in the character of what was written about or in the attention paid to it at the time. Pope's assertion was not only untrue, but he knew it to be untrue. Men were not then learning Chaucer's words by rote. Even now they are not in the habit of doing it to any great extent.

Yet though no justification exists for the attack, there may be found for it perhaps a certain excuse, or, at any

rate, explanation. A vague presentiment of the coming change may have been at the root of the feeling which provoked the line; for the whole 'Epistle' in which it is contained exhibits a timid as well as a hostile attitude of mind. The poets of the past were looming up larger and larger before the imaginations of men. The coming literary revolution had begun to cast its shadow long before there was any evidence of its being in sight. The feeble beginnings that attended this new revival of learning unconsciously inspired dread. In the movement then gradually taking form it may be no unwarranted extravagance of conjecture which fancies that Pope may have foreseen the influences that threatened his own downfall. Not that the consensus of all critics will ever deprive him of the lofty position he holds; but the supreme position he held in the eighteenth century could not forever be maintained. There may have been on his part an ill-defined feeling that the school he had founded must ultimately go down before this growing taste for the natural in poetry as distinguished from the purely intellectual. He could not well have forecast the strength and sweep of the storm that was slowly gathering. Still, with the prophetic sensitiveness of genius, he could hardly have failed to be conscious of the fact that it was in the air. There was, therefore, some ground for the repugnance he evinced. An Eddaic catastrophe was to involve in a general ruin the poetic creed that was then accepted and the poetic system that was established. It was not in the nature of things that Pope should look with absolute favor upon the giant race of elder poets, the representatives of the great natural

forces, through whose agency the impending destruction was largely to be accomplished. Nor with his belief in the literary superstitions of his time could he be expected to anticipate with complacency the twilight of the gods that was approaching, or to have faith in the new heaven and the new earth that were to succeed.

It was natural, therefore, that Pope should occasionally sneer at the antiquarian taste which, slowly as it spread, was gradually extending the knowledge and raising the reputation of Chaucer. At the same time, there can be no doubt of the genuineness of his appreciation as far as it went. This is something that cannot always be predicated of the men of letters of that day who were led, for various reasons, to celebrate the memory of the poet. The testimonials they bore to his greatness seem often to partake rather of the nature of a forced tribute than of a free-will offering. The purely conventional character of many of them there has been already frequent occasion to point out. The examples could be easily multiplied. Such an inscription, for instance, as Akenside composed for a statue of Chaucer never erected, and probably never intended to be erected, at Woodstock, is no evidence in itself of any familiarity with the author in whose honor it was written. It is merely a literary exercise in which nothing more is done than to repeat what it was the fashion for every man of letters of any position to say. Even notices of such a kind are likely to give a wrong impression of the feeling entertained about the poet, outside of the slowly growing but yet comparatively limited circle of those who appreciated him fully. To the

great mass of even the highly educated he still remained unknown. They continued to cherish the most baseless of the convictions in regard to him which had been held by the immediate past. Not content with simply inheriting its misapprehensions, they exaggerated them. Its errors they made still more erroneous. As a consequence we find that views which in the seventeenth century had been the views of a party had in the eighteenth become the views of nearly everybody. The opinions originally put forth as probable had been developed into the full vigor of positive statement, and were expressed with all the calm and confident assurance to which supreme knowledge or supreme ignorance alone can attain. Chaucer's verse was declared to be uncouth and inharmonious. His language had long become incomprehensible. His fame, so far as it could be said to exist, owed its preservation to the pious labors of Dryden and Pope. Even in spite of the tales modernized by the first and most popular of these two translators, he was looked upon merely as a humorous writer. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he was looked upon as a comic writer. It is certain that his humor, instead of being characterized as distinguished for lightness and delicacy, was described as of a coarse and barbarous nature. It was of a kind that could appeal only to the rude tastes of a rude age.

Such was, at that time, the language of the rank and file of those men of letters who are in the habit of writing volubly about matters which they know vaguely, or not at all. But however valueless their testimony may be in itself, it is always valuable for the reflection it

furnishes of the prevailing uninformed or ill-informed current opinion. Such it is in this instance. There is little limit to the misapprehension then expressed or implied. In one of the slighter pieces of the period the poet was styled "boozy Chaucer." The generally received belief of the educated class of the middle of the eighteenth century is adequately depicted in a few verses that will be cited from a poem published anonymously in 1761. It is entitled 'Woodstock Park, an Elegy,' and is one of the countless imitations that Gray's celebrated production called into being during the first fifty years after its appearance. A Scotchman named Hugh Dalrymple has the credit, such as it is, of being its author. As the writer was celebrating the glories of Woodstock, it was inevitable that he should drag in Chaucer. It is in the following lines that he gives us an insight into the character of the work he supposed the early poet produced, and of the fate that had already overtaken it:

"Old Chaucer, who in rough unequal verse
Sung quaint allusion and facetious tale;
And ever as his jests he would rehearse,
Loud peals of laughter echoed through the vale.
* * * * *
"What though succeeding poets, as they sire,[1]
Revere his memory and approve his wit;
Though Spenser's elegance and Dryden's fire
His name to ages far remote transmit;
"His tuneless numbers hardly now survive
As ruins of a dark and Gothic age;
And all his blithesome tales their praise derive
From Pope's immortal song and Prior's page."

[1] ? An error for "as their sire."

These lines confirm the opinion, derived from other sources, that to some extent, at least, the existence of modernizations, and the belief in their value, had a direct tendency at that time to divert men from the study of the original. Yet it was only by this latter method that knowledge of the poet could be substituted for knowledge about him, or that intelligent appreciation, based upon sympathy, could be aroused and maintained. It was therefore unavoidable that in a genuine revival of Chaucer's reputation the lead should be taken by scholars, as distinguished from men of letters. The interest in the poet exhibited by the latter class was rarely based upon anything but the most superficial acquaintance with his poetry. Consequently, like the seed sown upon stony soil, though it sprang up quickly, it as quickly withered away because it had no depth of root. At any rate, scholars did take the lead. But even with them, especially with those given up to the study of the classics, the feeling displayed did not often partake of the nature of enthusiasm. There was on their part a kind of hesitation as to the propriety of devoting much time or attention to one of the greatest of English writers. They talked and acted as if such a course was not altogether in accordance with the dignity of their profession. It is quite in contrast with the self-complacency they would have exhibited had they spent months and years in the elucidation of one of the obscurest, or in the celebration of one of the most contemptible, of Greek or Latin authors. "This, then, has been my amusement for some time," says Dr. Morell, in 1737, in the preface to his fragmentary edition of

Chaucer, "and I hope with no great detriment to the more severe and decent studies required by my place and character. I believe many a leisure hour might have been spent worse." It was not the men who could express themselves in this way that were likely to inspire others with a zeal which they themselves so conspicuously lacked.

From the fact, however, that the study of Chaucer in the original was largely confined to scholars, it was also inevitable that part of the reviving interest in his productions should be a result of the reverence paid to antiquity rather than to poetry. This, naturally, was not always the best way to extend his repute. In more than one instance he was harmed instead of helped by the indiscriminating eulogiums of antiquaries. Their want of appreciation of the literature that everybody knew tended to give an air of the ridiculous to their appreciation of the literature that nobody knew. By them and by their followers spurious work and inferior work was constantly held up as something worthy of special admiration. Estimates of this sort naturally provoked dissent from men who might not fully understand verse that was archaic, but did know it when it was good; and who could not have commonplace thrust upon them as an exhibition of genius because it chanced to be clothed in an antique garb. Consequently, the old familiar story of the feud between learning and letters, so frequent in the history of English literature, was repeated to some extent in the case of Chaucer. The scholars had usually no taste, and the men of taste had no scholarship. There were exceptions to this rule,

however. Some men of learning, who were also men of letters, not only knew the ancient poet themselves, but were earnest in their efforts to make him known to others. We learn, for instance, from Hearne that an ardent promoter of the attempt to bring out the edition which goes under the name of Urry was Atterbury, then dean of Christ Church.[1]

Here it may be remarked that one of the earliest efforts to revive the knowledge of the writers of the past, including Chaucer, was made by a woman. It was in 1737 that Elizabeth Cooper published specimens of the productions of several of these in a work which, on its different title-pages, is termed either 'The Historical and Poetical Medley' or 'The Muses' Library.' In this undertaking she had the assistance of the antiquary Oldys; but as the book appeared under her own name, it is the barest justice to hold her wholly responsible for its character. The selections contained in the volume came down to the age of Elizabeth, and the concluding ones were taken from the poet Daniel. The ones with which the volumes began purported to belong to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, though the language shows them to be a good deal later. There are other errors to be found in the book. There also appear, of course, the usual remarks, then current, about the rudeness and imperfection of the early tongue, the danger that beset the reputation of all authors from the fluctuations of speech, and the necessity of an academy. Still, I know of no similar work produced at that period in which the knowledge displayed

[1] *Reliquiæ Herniana*, 2d ed. (London, 1869), vol. i., p. 243.

is so accurate and comprehensive, or the critical estimate so uniformly good and just. There was exhibited in it not merely freshness of judgment, but the independence that springs from the study of writers at first hand. Mrs. Cooper's praise of Chaucer, though sincere, was not overdone. As a specimen of his powers she selected the unworn and highly characteristic prologue to the Pardoner's tale. The reason for this is worth giving, as furnishing additional proof of the general belief then entertained as to the superiority of Chaucer translated to Chaucer in the original. "Most of his principal tales," she wrote, "have been already exhausted by the moderns, and consequently neither of them would appear to advantage in their antiquated original dress."

This work was, however, too far in advance of the time to meet with any popular success. A continuation of it, which had been projected, was never brought out. The single volume published was more than enough for the men of that generation. These were too well satisfied with their own merit to give much heed to any merit which enthusiasts might fancy to exist in the past. Still, the intelligent study of Chaucer was steadily gaining ground. A special criticism made by one scholar deserves notice here for this reason rather than for any particular value we need attach to his estimate of the poet. It occurs in the writings of Bishop Hurd. His work entitled 'Letters on Chivalry and Romance' was originally published in 1762. It is the first, so far as I am able to discover, to bring out distinctly the truth that the tale of Sir Thopas was meant to be taken ironically and not seriously; that in it Chaucer anticipated Cervan-

tes in satirizing the stories of chivalry, though in his case it is not so much the adventures of the knights-errant that are held up to ridicule as the manner in which they had been recounted. Hurd does not profess to have discovered the fact for himself. It had been pointed out to him years before by some one whose name he does not mention. He confesses his surprise when he learned that the poet of so early a period, when chivalry was still flourishing, could have discerned the absurdity of the old romances, and have deliberately made them the subject of banter. The context, once carefully considered, leaves not the slightest doubt of the fact. Yet it seems scarcely to have been suspected by any one for centuries; though in this matter we may easily confound the failure to perceive with the failure to record. Sir Thomas Wyatt's observation in his poem on the 'Courtier's Life,' that he was not one to

> "Praise Sir Topas for a noble tale,
> And scorn the story that the Knight told,"

may perhaps be taken to show that the character of this particular piece had long before been appreciated by some as well as misunderstood by most.

It is the observations contained in Thomas Warton's 'History of English Poetry' that denote the high-water mark of the eighteenth-century judgment of Chaucer. To the oldest writers of English literature Warton was attracted both by the bent of his mind and the nature of his studies. In the first critical work he produced—the 'Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser,' which came out in 1754—he took occasion to

deplore the then prevalent indifference to the writings of the earliest of our great poets. His words still have a good deal of interest for the light they throw upon contemporary opinion. "I cannot dismiss this section," he said, "without a wish that this neglected author, whom Spenser proposed as the pattern of his style, and to whom he is indebted for many noble inventions, should be more universally studied. This is at least what one might expect in an age of research and curiosity. Chaucer is regarded rather as an old than as a good poet. We look upon his poems as venerable relics, not as beautiful compositions; as pieces better calculated to gratify the antiquarian than the critic. He abounds not only in strokes of humor, which is commonly supposed to be his sole talent, but of pathos and sublimity not unworthy a more refined age. His old manners, his romantic arguments, his wildness of painting, his simplicity and antiquity of expression, transport us into some fairy region, and are all highly pleasing to the imagination. It is true that his uncouth and unfamiliar language disgusts and deters many readers; but the principal reason of his being so little known, and so seldom taken into hand, is the convenient opportunity of reading him with pleasure and facility in modern imitations."

Both the progress of appreciation and the lack of full appreciation are clearly discernible in this passage. The feelings that inspired the view pervading it are displayed still more fully in the chapters of Warton's 'History' that are devoted to Chaucer. It was twenty years later — that is, in 1774 — that the volume containing these appeared. After that time a new order of things set in,

and new ways of looking at the early poet began to prevail. But these chapters will always be of interest and value for the information they give us of the sentiments of the transition period through which Chaucer's reputation was now passing. Warton's criticisms, though in the main following the old lines, showed plainly the greatness of the advance in knowledge that had been made. It is the work of a man who had read the writings of which he spoke, and not merely read about them. His selection of passages for commendation, and of passages characteristic of the poet's style, were usually taken from the genuine productions, and not, as had often been the case, from those which are now recognized as spurious. The praise, moreover, which he bestowed was so hearty that it excited comment, and in some instances dissent. I have already mentioned how Walpole's feelings were outraged by the preference apparently exhibited—for nothing of that nature is openly expressed—for the originals of Chaucer to the modernizations of Pope, and even of Dryden. Warton also added much matter illustrative of the poet's compositions, to which all succeeding writers have been under obligation. His work, indeed, is one which it will perhaps be always necessary to consult for its facts, its references, and its inferences; and though in many points it needs to be corrected, a long time will certainly elapse before it will be superseded.

All this can be said, and be said truly. But while the substantial merits of the chapters on Chaucer need not be denied, they are very far from being perfectly satisfactory. They were marked in particular by the defects

which invariably characterized the writings of both the Wartons. In certain ways these two scholars were the most irritating of commentators and literary critics. Their object was never so much to illustrate their author as to illustrate themselves. Instances of this disposition occur constantly in those sections of the 'History of English Poetry' which treat of Chaucer. Warton is constantly wandering away from his legitimate subject to furnish information about matters that concerned very remotely, if at all, the business in hand. Much of the material he collected is introduced not to throw light upon the question under consideration, but to parade his knowledge. Still, it is the spirit that pervades the work which is especially objectionable. About it lingered the apologetic air of the eighteenth century, which talked as if it had something of a contempt for itself for taking interest in an age when neither language nor poetry had reached the supreme elegance by which both were then distinguished. Warton's words make upon the mind the impression that he admired Chaucer greatly, and was ashamed of himself for having been caught in the act. Whenever he abandons conventionally accepted ground, we recognize at once the timid utterance of the man who feels called upon to put in a plea in extenuation of the appreciation he has manifested. At the very outset we are treated to a specimen of that sort of critical comment which is never able to stand alone, but must always bolster itself upon the crutches of other people's opinions. Warton probably knew more about the early writers of our speech than any man then living. His authority on the subject was certainly at that

time reckoned supreme. Yet he felt it necessary to summon to his support men whose views in this matter were of scarcely any authority at all. He began his account of Chaucer with the remark that this early writer had been "pronounced by a critic of unquestionable taste and discernment"—by whom he meant Dr. Johnson—"to be the first English versifier who wrote poetically."

Most disappointing of all, however, was the currency he gave to the foolish and misleading criticism which discussed the poet in the same style, and judged him according to the same standard, in which and by which Shakspeare had been treated and tried when he was termed by Voltaire a drunken savage, and by Diderot a rough-hewn Colossus. The tone, it is true, was altogether more respectful, but the general nature of the comment was the same. Of the 'House of Fame' Warton tells us that it contains "great strokes of Gothic imagination, yet bordering often on the most ideal and capricious extravagance." In discoursing upon the Knight's tale he speaks of the tremendous passage which describes the Temple of Mars in precisely the same spirit. "This group," he writes, "is the effort of a strong imagination unacquainted with the selection and arrangement of images. It is rudely thrown upon the canvas without order or art." The form of Mars which follows is said to be "touched with the impetuous dashes of a savage and spirited pencil." The portrait of Lycurgus, the King of Thrace, in the same piece, "is highly charged, and very great in the Gothic style of painting." Warton was once, indeed, led away by his enthusiasm to remark that a description of the morning in Chaucer vied "both

in sentiment and expression with the most finished modern poetical landscapes." He doubtless felt that praise had been exhausted in this extravagant utterance.

Warton, in fact, much as he had studied the earlier writers of our tongue, was not fitted to appreciate them fully or to criticise them justly. In his own writings he was nothing more than a reputable representative of that second-rate imitativeness which in the eighteenth century was sometimes looked upon as the first order of art. The poetry he produced as well as the poetry he was inclined to prefer is at best a poetry of recollection rather than of originality. In those who are not familiar with the sources from which it is taken or by which it is inspired it seldom awakens any responsive chord. It had no creative power. It looked, therefore, with suspicion, if not with repugnance, upon creative power that displayed itself in methods to which it was unaccustomed. Warton had much to say of the preference for Statius to Virgil exhibited by the men of the Middle Ages. He implied that it was the swelling phrase of the former author that caught their fancy as contrasted with the quiet beauty of the latter. Whatever truth may be in the assertion generally, we know it to be untrue in the case of Chaucer, whose admiration for the foremost Latin poet is expressed unequivocally, and whose familiarity with his greatest work is displayed in numerous passages. The nature of the comment, however, gives us a glimpse of the nature of Warton's mind. Some men put restraint upon expression because they have so much to say; others exhibit it because they have so little. To this latter class he belonged. His ideas were

tame, his method of enforcing them was still tamer. His objection to swelling phrases sprang from weakness and not from strength. It never occurred to him that timidity of expression was no more respectable than tumidity, and was much less promising. His narrow canons of taste led him, in consequence, to use undesignedly a patronizing tone, when speaking of the poet, which is singularly out of place. In his eyes Chaucer is a Goth—a Goth of genius, to be sure—but still a Goth. Being a Goth, he had not the severe self-restraint of the moderns, their chastity of diction, their propriety of manner; in fine, their art.

The constant use of the words Goth and Gothic demands perhaps a word of explanation. In the literature of the eighteenth century these epithets played about the same rôle that the word Philistine plays, or has begun to play, in this. They expressed a general disapprobation without putting the one who employed them under the necessity of substantiating what he meant by any precise definition. To call a man a Goth conveyed a vague sense of superiority on the part of him who uttered it, and a general sense of the disreputability of him about whom it was uttered; and it was made the harder to endure and the more potent to crush because the man who applied it did not usually understand what was meant by it any more than did the man to whom it was applied. It inevitably became in time the refuge of critical imbecility. With that the sense of shame attaching to it gradually disappeared. Gothic is now a complimentary epithet rather than a disparaging one. Even in Warton's time it had begun to lose, in fact it

had almost lost, the suggestion of reproach it had originally conveyed. Hurd had laboriously defended what it signified, or what he supposed it signified. Walpole, in his 'Castle of Otranto,' had founded a school of romance-writing which he dubbed with its name. It was therefore well along on the road to honor. The process is now repeating itself in the case of the modern word which in some senses has taken its place; and when we consider how much superior the men who are termed Philistines usually are to the men who so term them, we need not doubt that the latter epithet is also destined in time to become a title of special respect.

There is one other view which Warton expressed about Chaucer and his period that deserves consideration. Still, though it found a place in his 'History,' he was neither the first nor the last to give it utterance. This is to the effect that the poet was in a great measure hampered by the barbarous character of the time and of the language. That Chaucer was hampered by the fact that he had no great literary models in his own speech to follow is unquestionable. It is likewise true that he had personally to create the melody which he exemplified, and that this task was one which must have required for its accomplishment patience and labor as well as genius. But these were not the sort of obstacles that men had in mind. It was not the difficulty of moulding an uncultivated language into form that was suggested, but an incapacity inherent at the time in the language itself to be reduced to form or to find suitable expression for thought. There was widely prevalent a singular belief in the gradual improvement of poetry

from age to age. Its first attempts, according to this view, must be, comparatively speaking, a failure. Its notes must be artless and untuneful. Never was a more untenable doctrine held. A certain grade of development is, without doubt, necessary to a language before it can adapt itself to the purposes of the highest poetry; but that development takes place at a very early period in its history. When once it has come to pass, genius, which always starts out full-grown, finds in it a perfect instrument of expression. Yet, though the history of almost every literature furnishes satisfactory proof of the falsity of the belief that has been mentioned, it was one which for a long time seems to have held complete sway over men in regard to the English literature of the fourteenth century. Even where appreciation existed, surprise was always manifested that poetry so good could have been written so early. We find this feeling exhibited by Sir Philip Sidney. "Truly I know not," he says of Chaucer, "whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time saw so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him."[1] Dryden, as we have seen, tells us that he had added something of his own in his modernizations when he thought Chaucer had not given his thoughts their true lustre "for want of words in the beginning of our language." "We are surprised," writes Warton, "to find in a poet of such antiquity numbers so nervous and flowing." Even as late an author as Southey comes in to the support of this fallacy. "Surely Chaucer," he wrote to Landor in 1811, "is as much a poet as it was possible for him to be

[1] *Apology for Poetry* (Arber's reprint), p. 62.

while the language was in so rude a state."[1] That views of this sort should be held is not perhaps very strange; what is strange is to find them held by men of ability. Fancy a body of Alexandrine Greek critics deploring the barbarousness of the time in which Homer flourished, and imputing it to him as an additional merit that he had triumphed over the rudeness of the speech in which he wrote!

With Warton we do not take leave of the eighteenth century, but we do of its distinctive ideas. Not that they failed to survive to a later period. But they henceforth ceased to dominate to any marked extent the higher order of minds; and it is in the influence a great author exerts over these that the history of literary reputation is to be traced. Juster appreciation was speedily to follow from fuller knowledge. It was from the lack of knowledge, and not from the lack of intelligence, that Chaucer's fame had mainly suffered in the eighteenth century. There are certain characteristics of his writings with which the men of that age would have been in fullest sympathy, had they been sufficiently familiar with his language to understand them. Perhaps it would not be out of the way to assert that they would have been in fuller sympathy with them than the men of most periods. The clearness and ease which distinguish the early poet's work, the uniformly low level upon which he moves, the utter absence of shock and strain, the indefinable charm and geniality of his manner, would have specially recommended him to the favor of that large body of cultivated readers then liv-

[1] *Southey's Life and Correspondence*, vol. iii., p. 295.

ing who had been trained under the influence of French literature, were largely swayed by its canons of taste, and felt most keenly the attractiveness of its methods of expression. To their appreciation he was specially fitted to appeal. For in those qualities in which that literature excels, Chaucer has come nearer to it than any other author of our tongue. Its lightness, its grace, the perfect proportion of part to part, the perfection of finish, the delicacy yet brilliancy of touch, the archness of the satire as contrasted with the downright English directness, the exquisite bonhomie—all these, which supremely characterize the finest French art, are the very traits which distinguish Chaucer most from the other writers of our speech. But these qualities were hidden from the men who would best have enjoyed them, because knowledge of them could only be gained by a fuller study than they had the disposition to bestow or the facilities to carry on; while the things that repelled them—especially the disregard of what they called propriety—lay upon the surface, and could not miss being seen by the most careless.

It was the publication, in 1775, of Tyrwhitt's edition of the 'Canterbury Tales' that heralded the coming of a new order of things. It needs a thorough familiarity with eighteenth-century comment, of which I have given a few examples, to realize fully from what a body of misconception of all sorts that great scholar rescued the reputation of the poet. For the first time since the invention of printing Chaucer appeared in a proper light before his countrymen. A text was furnished which, however unsatisfactory to the requirements of

modern linguistic science, has comparatively little to dread from any purely literary comparison. The impetus which Tyrwhitt gave to the study of the poet never ceased to operate from the time it was first set in motion. Its beginnings, it is true, were small. It was not until 1798 that the second edition of his work was published by Oxford University. But long before that time his text had been pirated by Bell. It had also been embodied in the collection of English poetry made by Dr. Anderson. After the beginning of the present century reprints of it were numerous, and by the middle of it the 'Canterbury Tales' had been made accessible to every one in a large number of cheap forms.

The various services which Tyrwhitt rendered to the study of the poet have been noticed in their appropriate places in this work. Here it is only necessary to specify one particularly. It was he who first effectually laid the ghost of the most persistent error that haunted the men of the eighteenth century. This was the doctrine of the irregularity and uncouthness of Chaucer's versification. A glimmering of the truth about this subject had been caught by Urry. It dawned with a little more distinctness upon the mind of Morell. After a vague fashion, it subsequently became known to other scholars. But the real facts in the matter had never been fully and precisely stated. They had never affected in the slightest the general opinion, for they had never been brought out in a way that could be comprehended by all. This it was Tyrwhitt's distinction to do. The theory of Chaucer's versification he set forth with a clearness and force that carried with it at once almost

universal conviction of its truth. In the application of it he made mistakes, owing to the then pardonable lack of acquaintance with the earlier grammatical forms of our tongue. But the principle upon which the reading of Chaucer's verse rested he established so firmly that it henceforth required incapacity to miss it, or perversity of judgment to refuse to accept it. Errors of detail it is now easy to point out. But the value of the work he accomplished will be denied least of all by those who are aware how great an obstacle to the appreciation of Chaucer and to the extension of his reputation was the belief in the ruggedness of his versification which the eighteenth century cherished almost religiously.

On that point the critical estimate had remained about the same as that which Dryden had adopted and established. The early poet's ore, to use the simile of that author, was purest gold; but it was not only debased by admixture, it was incrusted with rough earth. All through the eighteenth century there are constant references to the homeliness of his diction and the lameness of his versification. Even in our own century there have been found professed students of our early literature to talk of the rudeness and imperfection of his metre. But what is now a sporadic utterance was then the accepted doctrine. There is scarcely a single comment upon Chaucer made in the first three quarters of the last century that does not either assert or imply that his verse was rough and uncouth. More than one piece of testimony to this effect has already been given. With rudeness of versification was also

joined, in their eyes, obscurity of meaning. The whole critical attitude of the men of that time can perhaps be fairly conveyed by the quotation of a single stanza contained in a poem written by Robert Lloyd, the friend of Churchill. This was one of the numerous imitations of Spenser, then the fashion to produce, and was published in 1751. Its title was 'The Progress of Envy;' for it was occasioned by the exposure of the forgery of Lauder in his attack upon the originality of Milton. It is in the following way that Lloyd spoke of the early poet. In its comment upon the simplicity of his style, the rudeness of his verse, and the obscurity of his language, we find embodied in brief space the common and the most favorable view then current:

"Not far from these, Dan Chaucer, ancient wight,
A lofty seat on Mount Parnassus held,
Who long had been the Muses' chief delight;
His reverend locks were silvered o'er with eld;
Grave was his visage and his habit plain;
And while he sung, fair nature he displayed,
In verse albeit uncouth and simple strain;
Ne mote he well be seen, so thick the shade
Which elms and aged oaks had all around him made."

The blundering of men of letters without learning and the boorishness of scholars without taste had united to confer upon Chaucer this utterly unwarranted and discreditable reputation for ruggedness of versification. Such was the force of this feeling that this assumed rudeness began under the stress of antiquarian study to be looked upon as a virtue, and was seriously praised as a positive proof of merit. We have had already one

illustration of this view. In the lines quoted from Harrison, the majesty of Chaucer's muse is supposed to disdain the trivialities of cadence and sound. "Old honest Clytus," we are told, "scorns a Persian dress."[1] A little later, the antiquary John Dart, in a poem on Westminster Abbey, gave expression to the same opinion. He re-echoed the sentiment of Dryden's lines that to Chaucer the Greek and the Roman bard must give place; and then proceeded to pay him a compliment of this equivocal sort:

> "His rough bold strokes, with rude unpolished pride,
> Art's curious touch and nicest care deride."

No one ever thought of praising Homer and Virgil after this fashion. That any one ever did so praise Chaucer is nothing more than an evidence of the occasional triumph of matter over mind. For it is essential to the adoption of such a theory that supposed learning must overbalance actual taste.

A belief like this naturally died away as the truth brought out by Tyrwhitt became better and better known. With it disappeared one of the greatest obstacles that had hindered the full recognition of the early poet's greatness. But besides the removal of this stumbling-block new and powerful positive agencies were coming in to advance the interest taken in his writings. The great intellectual movement which began towards the close of the last century was largely a revolt against the dominant ideas that had long prevailed in literature. One of its immediate results was to lift Chaucer into a

[1] See page 106.

position of special prominence, not with the mass of even educated men, to be sure, but with the leaders of this literary revolt that was marching on its way to successful revolution. As the poet of naturalness he appealed most strongly to the pioneers in this revival. He was one of the few authors whom Wordsworth read constantly; one of the exceedingly few to whom he felt and admitted inferiority. Southey's admiration was expressed with a frequency that compelled him to repeat on numerous occasions the same sentiments in almost the same words. "Chaucer," he writes, "stands in the first rank with Spenser, Shakspeare and Milton: and in variety of power Shakspeare is his only peer."[1] Coleridge shared fully in the feelings of his friends. His regard for the poet was one which he continued to hold till the end of his life. "I take unceasing delight in Chaucer," he said in 1834. "His manly cheerfulness is especially delicious to me in my old age. How exquisitely tender he is, and yet how perfectly free from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping!"[2]

There is, in fact, scarcely a prominent writer of the later Georgian period who has not somewhere given testimony of his admiration and appreciation of Chaucer. It varies, as might be expected, in character and intensity. Some of the criticism with which it was accompanied will strike the men of to-day as singularly inadequate. This is particularly the case with the comments of Scott and of Campbell. Some, moreover, of the tributes paid are paid in the most perfunctory manner. They read like the utterances of persons not too

[1] *Life of Cowper*, vol. ii., p. 121 (1836). [2] *Table Talk*, March 15, 1834.

familiar with what they are writing about, and give the impression that their authors are making believe very hard to like out of deference to the opinions of those whom they recognize to be better judges than themselves. Still, this exhibition of deference is evidence that the poet had now won such hold over the higher class of minds that it was felt incumbent to profess respect for him, even if one did not profess admiration. We need not waste time and thought upon this half-hearted appreciation from which all authors will suffer as long as there is diversity of taste among men. There was plenty of enthusiasm then exhibited for Chaucer outside of utterances of this sort. There had come likewise to be a general agreement in the recognition given to his greatness. To this chorus of approbation there was one noteworthy exception in the case of Byron. Far too much, however, has been made of his words. A weight has been assigned to them at which he himself could hardly have failed to be astounded. For the views expressed by him are the views of a mere boy who stands ready to settle all questions of taste, and solve all problems in statesmanship and morals with the unhesitating confidence of bright but bumptious youth. His observations upon Chaucer occur in the entry of a memorandum book of the works he had read at the time it was written. It belongs to the year 1807. He was then less than twenty years old. This one fact settles the value to be attributed to what he said, not merely as opinions, but as Byron's opinions. There is in his remarks much affectation of learning, and his conclusions are announced with all the dreadful earnestness

of boyhood. "Chaucer," he writes, "notwithstanding the praise bestowed on him, I think obscene and contemptible:—he owes his celebrity merely to his antiquity, which he does not deserve as well as Pierce Plowman or Thomas of Ercildoune. English living poets I have avoided mentioning:—we have none who will not survive their productions. Taste is over with us; and another century will sweep our empire, our literature, and our name from all but a place in the annals of mankind." Here it will be observed that where the critic leaves off, the prophet begins. It would, of course, be grossly unfair to hold the man responsible for the utterances of the boy. There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that Byron at any time of his life knew much of Chaucer, if anything. He was too great a poet himself, and had in particular too keen an enjoyment of humor, not to have appreciated in that case a mind which on its satirical side was closely allied to his own. Still, there is something so delightful in Byron at any age taking Chaucer to task for obscenity that it would have been a misfortune not to have had his words recorded. The lofty standard of virtue he early attained it is not given to the man of average morals ever to reach.

It would obviously be unreasonable to lay much stress upon the accident of familiarity or non-familiarity with Chaucer's works upon the part of particular persons, no matter at what period they lived. Still, I cannot but feel that in his case the difference of knowledge and feeling exhibited by two celebrated women, writing at an interval of less than fifty years apart, marks fairly the difference of interest and of taste that had come to

prevail among the educated class during the course of half a century. Both of these persons held an important position in the literature of their day. Both were persons of exceptional cultivation and attainment. Both were deeply interested in poetry. One of them is Miss Carter. She belongs in spirit as well as in time to the last century. Among women she is perhaps its greatest scholar. Her distinction in her own age was due full as much to her learning as to her purely literary achievement. To Chaucer it might be supposed she would have been attracted by scholastic tastes, if not by literary. Yet she knows nothing of him save what she has learned from the reference in the 'Il Penseroso' of Milton. This fact she tells us herself in a letter written to Mrs. Montagu in 1776. Though Milton celebrates Chaucer, the knowledge of the early poet that can be gathered from his pages is naturally of the mistiest conceivable character. Yet with this knowledge Miss Carter was content. Contrast her state of mind with that of Mary Russell Mitford, whose tastes lay much more in the direction of literature than in that of learning. We might expect that she would have been repelled by linguistic difficulties that certainly would not have deterred, if they actually would not have attracted, her predecessor. So far was this from being the case that not only were Chaucer's writings well known to Miss Mitford, they inspired her with a profound enthusiasm. If Milton and Shakspeare were set aside, she was inclined to prefer him to almost any writer in the circle of English poets. "Two or three of his Canterbury Tales," she wrote to a correspondent in 1815, "and

some select passages from his other productions are worth all the age of Queen Anne, our Augustan age, as it has been called, ever produced."[1]

Up to a late period the knowledge of Chaucer has been mainly confined to that comparatively small body of men whose tastes were especially literary or scholarly. It is only since the middle of this century that acquaintance with his works has broadened and extended to circles to which nothing more than his name would once have penetrated. This statement is particularly true of the last twenty-five years. It is probably well within bounds to say that Chaucer is now read by a score of persons where not long ago he was read by scarcely one. At no period since the latter half of the sixteenth century has knowledge of the poet been so great as now, and interest in his writings so widespread. Not only does the number of his students constantly increase, but the facilities for studying him increase proportionately. Not a year passes which does not bring forth the result of some investigation that throws light upon points previously obscure or unintelligible, and add some scrap of information to the scanty stock of knowledge we possess about the man and his writings. Not a year passes which does not see some of his productions come out in a new form. Edition after edition appears of his works in whole or in part. More have been published during the past twenty years than came from the press during the previous three hundred. Something of this revival is doubtless due to the increasing attention paid to the earlier periods of the English language, which has naturally directed the minds

[1] *Life of Mary Russell Mitford* (London, 1870), vol. i., p. 311.

of men to the first great representative author in English literature. More of it has been due to the impulse given to the special study of the poet's writings by the formation of the Chaucer Society. This began its publications in 1868. Still, that society was itself a result of the deep interest that had come to be displayed in the works of him for whose sake it was founded. Nor does the feeling which prompted this study show signs of diminution. It grows, and it grows so rapidly that its increase seems sometimes to partake more of the nature of geometrical progression than of arithmetical.

All this will be conceded by him who is familiar with the facts. As Chaucer is constantly appealing to a wider and wider circle of readers, it may be thought, in consequence, that the day is not far distant when he will become a popular poet in the sense we attach to the phrase as applied to an author of the first rank. That such he is pre-eminently fitted to be, both by the variety of his powers and his unrivalled skill in narration, cannot be denied. Yet I am bound to record my own conviction that to this position he can never attain until his writings have been put into modern orthography. There are those who do not care for any such result. They feel as did Landor, that as many people read Chaucer as are fit to read him. There may be both truth and justice in this view. Certainly with those holding it no argument on this point can very well be maintained. There is, however, a far larger number of those who believe that the influence of one of the healthiest spirits in our or in any literature should be extended as far and wide as possible. To this the orthography

in which the poet appears presents a barrier not easily overcome. The spelling of Chaucer in any edition—for in this respect no two editions are alike—is not at all hard to master. Still, to the unpractised eye it looks formidable. It is sufficiently awe-inspiring in appearance to keep a large body of intelligent men from attempting to assail it. More than that, it has not only been enough to deter persons fully capable of appreciating the poet from the effort to make his acquaintance, it has in many instances deprived them of the desire.

Acting under this conviction, I have in this work followed the practice of putting into modern orthography the extracts I have taken from Chaucer's writings, unless some special object in view required the retention of the ancient spelling. This is a proceeding upon which most scholars look with disfavor, if not with positive aversion. It may be proper, therefore, to conclude this chapter with a discussion of the grounds upon which this action is based. It will not, of course, be suspected that any one who has studied even superficially the English language will stand up for the present orthography as a thing creditable in itself. He may accept it as a burden of which he sees no present way of getting rid; but that is something altogether different from taking pride in it or looking upon it as an object worthy of regard. There is certainly nothing more contemptible than our present spelling, unless it be the reasons usually given for clinging to it. The divorce which has unfortunately almost always existed between English letters and English scholarship makes nowhere a more pointed exhibition of itself than in the comments which

men of real literary ability make upon proposals to change or modify the cast-iron framework in which our words are now clothed. On one side there is an absolute agreement of view on the part of those who are authorized by their knowledge of the subject to pronounce an opinion. These are well aware that the present orthography hides the history of the word, instead of revealing it; that it is a stumbling-block in the way of derivation or of pronunciation, instead of a guide to it; that it is not in any proper sense a growth or development, but a mechanical malformation which owes its existence to the ignorance of early printers and the necessity of consulting the convenience of printing-offices. This consensus of scholars makes the slightest possible impression upon men of letters throughout the whole great Anglo-Saxon community. There is hardly one of them who is not calmly confident in the superiority of his opinion to that of the most famous special students, who have spent years in examining the subject. There is hardly one of them who does not fancy that he is manifesting a noble conservatism by holding fast to some spelling peculiarly absurd, and thereby maintaining a bulwark against the ruin of the tongue. There is hardly one of them who does not hesitate to discuss the question in its entirety, while every word he utters shows that he does not even understand its elementary principles. There would be something thoroughly comic in turning into a fierce international dispute the question of spelling *honor* without the *u*, were it not for the depression which every student of the language cannot well help feeling in contemplating the hopeless abysmal

ignorance of the history of the tongue which any educated man must first possess in order to become excited on the subject at all. Such a state of things could not exist—it would not, in fact, be tolerated—in a nation of scholars like the German. It is, perhaps, not unreasonable to hope that, as a result of the increasing attention paid to our early speech, enough knowledge about the history of our orthography may filter down to the average man of letters to enable him to comprehend what are the real difficulties in the way of reforming English spelling, and lead him to abandon his present habit of bringing forward imaginary ones that are little more than the inventions of his own ignorance.

This is, undoubtedly, one reason that has some weight with many scholars in the desire they feel to retain the ancient spelling in the case of the works of Chaucer. He is attracting more and more the regard of a large class of cultivated readers. The argument in his pages against the orthographical superstitions in which we have been brought up cannot fail in the long run to impress the minds even of the careless. But, after all, this has never been the main reason for retaining the original spelling. Nor, if it were, would this be a good ground for adhering to it. A great poet does not exist for the reformation of linguistic evils or for instruction in any branch of linguistic science. The proper light in which to view him is a literary light. With those who seek the widest extension of his influence everything should be made subordinate to the extension of the knowledge of him as a poet, and only as a poet. Our existing orthography is upon us. Until it can be shaken

off, we must accept it; and he who wishes to be widely read must appear in it. For one, I am unable to see any more reason for retaining Chaucer in the spelling of his time, so far as popular use is concerned, than for retaining Shakspeare. There has never been the slightest pretext for continuing to reproduce Spenser's works as they were originally printed. In spite of his affectation of the archaic, he is generally as modern as any writer of his period, and his lines present fewer difficulties in the way of comprehension or of recitation than those of some of our own contemporaries. For students the works of Chaucer, as well as of other ancient writers, will always be required in the spelling of their age. Nor need we limit the necessity to ancient writers. For scholarly study the text of every great author, whether early or late, should be produced exactly as he brought it into being. There are numerous questions connected with language and versification which render such a course indispensable. But it is not in behalf of students that in this instance a resort to modern spelling is proposed. It is for that already large and steadily increasing class who would go to Chaucer, not at all from linguistic, but from purely literary motives. For them the thought and the expression of the thought are the only things to be considered. There is no more need of placing in the way of such persons an unfamiliar and obsolete orthography than there would be in the case of Shakspeare. The difficulty of putting the language into a form fitted for popular comprehension is indeed much greater in the one instance than in the other. The variations in accentuation and pronunciation are far

wider between the nineteenth century and the fourteenth century than between the nineteenth and the sixteenth. But the principle is precisely the same, and the difficulties, so far from being insurmountable, are not even formidable.

One practical objection has been raised against this course. It has been said that the experiment has already been tried and has proved a failure. In 1835 Charles Cowden Clarke brought out two volumes of the poet's writings under the title of 'The Riches of Chaucer.' The first volume contained the general Prologue and eleven of the tales, with their introductions; the second, extracts from the other poems, especially from 'Troilus and Cressida.' In this work the spelling was modernized and the accentuation marked. The edition, as can be seen, was very far from being a complete one. It was designedly made an expurgated one. It was professedly addressed to those whom Mr. Clarke called his young friends. He purposed, to use his own words, "to omit all those tales and casual passages of ill-favored complexion, which, if retained, would infallibly banish the book from the very circles whither it was directed, and where I hope to hear of its welcoming—I mean those ornaments of this civilized age and patterns to the civilized world, the ingenuous, intelligent, well-informed, and artless young women of England." Still, the edition, incomplete as it was, contained a great deal of Chaucer's best poetry. All difficulties, moreover, in the way of reading it had been removed, so far as that could be done. If a work of this character could succeed, this then, it is said, ought to have succeeded. Yet it did

not. The ingenuous, intelligent, well-informed, and artless young women of England, the ornaments of this civilized age and patterns to the civilized world, did not apparently take kindly to the intellectual nutriment that had been provided for their special delectation. There is no evidence that this edition increased the number of Chaucer's readers. It certainly did not make him popular. Nor was acquaintance with his writings materially aided by the same process of modernizing the spelling which was carried out in the edition of the 'Canterbury Tales' which was included in the collection of the British Poets that appeared in 1860 under the editorship of Gilfillan.

The fact can be admitted that Clarke's volumes did not make Chaucer popular. It is the inferences that have been drawn from the fact that are objectionable. It was not possible for any edition in any form that appeared at that time to cause him to be widely read. The age was not ripe for the attainment of any such result. Public attention had not been attracted to the early poet; public interest had not been aroused in him; nor outside of the special body of highly educated men, more or less scholarly in their tastes, did much curiosity exist about him. Appreciation of his writings could not be expected to spring up in a day. It is a growth, not a special creation. Moreover, there were marked defects in the work itself. It was an incomplete edition, and this is something which no one, man or woman, is disposed to like. It was an expurgated edition, which is something all men detest. It was printed in type most villainously small. If the young women to whom

it was dedicated had pored over it, they would have been compelled to sacrifice their eyesight to their intellectual development. In addition, while the pronunciation was indicated, it was not always indicated correctly. This was especially true of the accent when it fell upon a syllable of the word different from that upon which it now ordinarily rests. This last imperfection was largely aggravated in Gilfillan's edition, in which Clarke's modernizations were used so far as they had been made. These defects would be enough of themselves to show the worthlessness of the inferences that have been drawn from the assumed ill-success that attended the project. But even the ill-success is nothing but an assumption. This edition met with about the same amount of favor that might have been anticipated for a work of the kind appearing at the time it did. The only reason for looking upon it as a failure is that it failed to come up to the unreasonable expectation entertained by its projector.

This clothing of the poet's words in modern orthography necessarily involves taking, so far as popular use is concerned, the still further ground that he should be pronounced as near to modern English as can be done without destroying the harmony of the versification. Great efforts have been put forth during the past few years to recover the pronunciation of Chaucer's time. The subject is an interesting one; the pursuit of it has already been attended with marked success; and the importance of the information secured cannot well be overrated. But there is always a tendency to extend the results of investigations of this character beyond

their legitimate province, and to intrude them into matters with which they have no concern. That tendency is plainly manifesting itself at the present time in the views entertained about the proper pronunciation of Chaucer's words. Into a discussion involving honest difference of opinion it is undesirable to import any terms that are liable to beget ill-feeling. Yet it seems to me impossible to overlook the fact that the revival of interest in the poet has been accompanied to no small degree with a revival of what is perilously near pedantry, if not of pedantry itself. In more than one way is there danger of genuine literary appreciation of his writings being swamped in the attention paid to purely linguistic detail. There could be no more formidable obstacle raised to the popularization of his poetry than to require it to be pronounced according to the manner in which scholars, working, it is true, with imperfect appliances, have concluded that it must have been pronounced, and to insist that it is in this way only that it can be pronounced properly. That special students should be expected to master such a system arises from the necessity they lie under of keeping up with the results of the latest investigations. For any attempt to impose it upon the general body of cultivated men there is not the slightest justification.

The literary study of Chaucer is one thing; the linguistic study is quite another. Let us assume, what we can never know certainly, that we are able to pronounce his words exactly as he pronounced them himself. This would be an invaluable acquisition for the student of language, especially for the student of phonetics. It

would not help him or any one else a jot or tittle towards the appreciation of the beauty and power of Chaucer's poetry. For most men it would produce consequences quite the reverse. It would detract from the effect of his lines instead of adding to them. The latter result could be reached only in the case of the exceedingly few to whom this particular pronunciation had become so familiar that all impression of strangeness had been worn away by frequency of use. If in reading a sentence of any writer we are led to think not of what it means, but of how it sounds, we may be looking at it as a contribution to knowledge, but we are not really looking at it as literature, whatever may be the view we entertain of our own view. If a special student of Chaucer enjoys his verse only when he pronounces it as he supposes the poet himself pronounced it, there is not the slightest need of his depriving himself of the gratification he derives from that source. But he has no right to insist that others shall be forced to follow in his footsteps, and to feel that they are not making a genuine literary study of the author because they do not have the time to learn or the desire to adopt a pronunciation the acquisition of which has been attended with no small labor to himself, and his practice of which is usually fraught with no small misery to others.

There is in this matter no likeness to the question of the adoption of the pronunciation of Latin to which it has been sometimes compared. The position of the two tongues is essentially different. Latin in any pronunciation would be at first unfamiliar to the student. The choice of the one to be employed is therefore a

matter to be decided on grounds of convenience or of scholarship. But we are born into a particular pronunciation of English. We have not adopted it, we have inherited it. We have heard it from earliest childhood, and manhood has strengthened the hold it has upon us. It had, in fact, become a part of our life before we were capable of reasoning whether it was in itself good or bad. The result is that English which is pronounced differently strikes us at the worst as uncouth or vulgar; at the best, as odd or quaint. In the latter case a certain interest of its own may attach to it, may in the instance of an ancient author enhance apparently his charm, if the difference does not affect perceptibly the ease of comprehension. But there it stops. If this difference is made a matter to which supreme attention must be paid, the secret of literary enjoyment has been lost. The sign has taken the place of the thing signified. We are diverted, we may occasionally be fascinated, by the strangeness of the sound; but the quaintness of the attire makes us forget the sentiment which it was designed to clothe.

The objections which have been raised to putting the writings of the poet into modern orthography, and pronouncing his words as far as possible according to modern methods, seem to me particularly futile. Much more could be said against the proposition if we had Chaucer's works as they came direct from his own hand, and consequently represented his own spelling. As it is, wide variations in this respect not only exist between different manuscripts, but between the same words as found in different parts of the same manuscript. Famil-

iarity with the ancient orthography has, however, bred among scholars something of that same unreasoning veneration for it which is displayed by educated men towards our modern orthography. Verses written in the spelling of a remote period are supposed by that very fact to retain a peculiar literary aroma which would be lost wholly, or in part, if they appeared in forms to which we are accustomed. There are, at least there seem to be, persons who fancy that not merely the flavor of antiquity, but the flavor of poetry, would disappear from Chaucer's writings if, for illustration, words such as *hevene*, *erthe*, *fyr*, and *teer* should appear as *heaven*, *earth*, *fire*, and *tear*. We have been actually assured that a modern orthography transports us at once from the days of the Plantagenets.[1] For those who feel in this way the ancient texts are always accessible. The spelling of our time may be thought sufficiently satisfactory by those who are not easily transported, or who do not care if they are transported. What appeals to such men is the purely literary aspect of poetry, independent of the time or place of its production. For it is to be borne in mind that in modernizing the spelling of Chaucer we are not meddling in the slightest with the integrity of his text; we are not substituting other words for the words he wrote; we are not making any modifications in his grammar. All that is essential to him as a man of letters continues to exist in any orthography that is adopted.

We have been told, again, that with our modern English method of pronunciation we should have an accent

[1] Hippisley's *Early English Literature*, p. 76.

that would fail to satisfy the poet's ear; that he would not be able to understand his own verse if he returned to earth; that, in fact, it would strike him as something little better than gibberish.[1] To me it does not seem a matter of the slightest consequence whether, under such circumstances, he could understand it or not. In the first place, he is not going to return to earth. If he does, we may rest assured that he, a man of supremest common-sense, will at once proceed to learn the existing pronunciation in order to hold communion with a hundred million of his fellow-creatures, and not ask them to set about acquiring the pronunciation of the fourteenth century to hold communion with him; more especially as the way that has been adopted to sound his words may turn out to be not much more intelligible to him than the way they are regularly sounded now. But as there is no prospect of his making his reappearance, it is only necessary to say that it is not his feelings that are to be consulted. In this matter we pay no heed to Shakspeare. Why should an exception be made in favor of Chaucer? No one asks whether a modern accent would satisfy the ear of the dramatist in case he returned to earth and took advantage of the occasion to listen to the acting of one of his own plays.

This last comparison puts the case clearly before us. Our pronunciation would seem strange and frequently grotesque to Shakspeare. His would seem strange and occasionally vulgar to us. If his sublimest tragedies could be acted before a modern audience exactly as they were pronounced in his day, there is reason to be-

[1] Ellis's *Early English Pronunciation*, part i., pp. 255 and 258.

lieve that some of the most powerful passages they contain would have the effect of producing laughter rather than admiration or grief or horror. They would, at any rate, be largely shorn of their beauty and effectiveness. By a select circle of scholars, trained in the history of sounds, they might be enjoyed while the experiment had the interest of novelty. To the vast majority of any audience they would seem to take on the nature of travesty. Assuredly, the principal legitimate interest in them would be that of curiosity. While their performance might serve as a contribution to knowledge, it would fail in the infinitely higher aim for which the work was written. We do not need to learn the way Shakspeare spelled his words to appreciate their significance, or the way he sounded them to feel their inspiration. What he has given us depends upon no such chances of change or accidents of circumstance. If the knowledge of his writings, if the recognition of his genius, rested upon our familiarity with the orthography and pronunciation he employed, the influence of the serenest and stateliest spirit in all literature would be confined to a scanty number of men, many of whom would have no interest in him as a poet, but only as an authority upon phonetics.

Remarks of the same general nature are true about Chaucer, though not to the same degree. Shakspeare's lines can be accommodated in most instances to modern ears with as much ease as if they had been written yesterday. In the case of the elder poet, however, there must be, under any circumstances, variations from modern usage which the reader or hearer must be trained to

accept. For that very reason it is desirable to reduce these variations to the lowest possible limit that is consistent with the literary integrity of the text. For the difference between the two authors in this matter is not a difference of kind. The method that has been applied to the one can be trusted to succeed safely with the other. It is upon his value as a man of letters, and not upon his linguistic value, that the fame of Chaucer must be established, if it is expected to attain breadth as well as permanence. The extent of his popularity will depend, in the long run, upon the degree to which he is made easily accessible to that vast body of men who will refuse to encounter the obstacles which they have been taught to consider as necessarily standing in the way of any proper comprehension of his writings. The greatest of stumbling-blocks in their pathway will have been removed when the poet has been released as far as possible from the bondage of an obsolete orthography. This is not to decry its value for special purposes. It is not to maintain that editions of the ancient texts will not always be needed, and will not always need to be studied. It is to insist that for the great body of even educated men they are not a necessity, and that, so far as these are concerned, they contribute nothing to the spread of the poet's fame.

The superstition of scholars may, and doubtless will, delay the time of Chaucer's deliverance from this bondage, but will not prevent its coming at last. It took a good deal more than a century to put his works into Roman type after the rest of our literature had abandoned black-letter. We know what sorrow of heart that

act brought to the antiquarian students of the age in which it was accomplished, who felt that, by making his writings more accessible in this way, a loftier scholarship had succumbed to the demands of a slothful and ease-loving generation. Nor need it be denied that loss of a certain kind there will be in putting Chaucer's works into modern orthography. But whatever the loss, the gain will be far greater. It will be greater, too, in ways of which we can now but vaguely feel the importance. For as things are at present shaping themselves, there is danger that the same fate is threatening the most famous of our early poets which has, in large measure, overtaken his Greek and Latin predecessors; that to many the ultimate object of his existence will seem to have been for little other purpose than to make schoolboys miserable. Chaucer should be saved from any such degradation. To us he should be made a delight and an inspiration, as he was to his contemporaries. There are plenty of early writers who can properly be made the subject of grammatical training. From them the intricacies of syntax, the variations of inflection, the peculiarities of pronunciation, can be readily learned. But the study of a great English classic should be made primarily a literary one. Moreover, not even secondarily, but very remotely instead, should it be made a linguistic one. Any other course may, after a fashion, keep alive the poet; but it will certainly be effective in destroying the poetry.

# VIII.

## CHAUCER AS A LITERARY ARTIST

# CHAUCER AS A LITERARY ARTIST

THE unhappy difference of opinion that prevails between authors and reviewers was not a result that followed from the invention of printing. The controversy is as old as literature itself. It need not be fancied that there was ever a time when depreciation did not flourish, because it is only in modern days that it has been in a position to leave behind memorials of its existence. The critic was abroad long before the schoolmaster. He was just as active in the fourteenth century as he is in the nineteenth. He was in the eyes of the author just as malignant then as now, though he had at that time no official organs in which to express his sentiments, no periodical which could give the sanction of collective authority to his individual judgment. But he could make himself felt. Sometimes it was in heavy books. More often it was in slight pieces, copies of which would circulate from hand to hand in the small circle of which the reading world then consisted. If all other agencies failed, he could count pretty confidently on his words reaching the author through the never-failing medium of acquaintances and friends.

The references to Chaucer that have come down to us from his own age and the age that immediately followed are indeed singularly unanimous in his praise. No discordant voice breaks the note of approval which cele-

brates him as the chief poet of Britain, as the great creative spirit that had breathed into our literature the breath of life. But though disparagement failed even to perpetuate the remembrance of itself, there can be neither doubt of its existence nor of the favor with which it was received. Ill-natured criticism, whether it be just or unjust, will always be read or heard with pleasure by even good-natured men so long as envy, malice, and all uncharitableness are avenues to the human heart. Posterity is inclined to remember the great writer only by his successes. Contemporaries never forget to fix their attention upon his failures. Chaucer, we may be sure, had no different experience from all men of genius before or since his time. He had to encounter the attacks of the bitter enemy, the condescending praise of the intellectual being too superior to find anything very admirable which others like enthusiastically, and, worse than all, he had to endure the guarded approval of the candid friend. He has not, indeed, expressed himself upon the subject ever present to the mind of the author with the wrath which marks the utterances of Spenser, Daniel, and Drayton. That was something which it was not in his nature to do, even had he suffered more keenly than they. But even if he was indifferent to the attacks made upon him, he was not unaware of their existence.

On this point his writings furnish us a good deal of testimony of an indirect sort. In spite of the lack of recorded criticism, there is satisfactory evidence that the critic was known to Chaucer and recognized by him as a very positive entity. Illustrations of the fact are far

from infrequent. In one place the poet anticipates and replies to a possible objector who might find fault with his representation of the suddenness with which Cressida is inspired with love for Troilus. It is in this way that he disposes of the cavil and the caviller:

"Now mightè some envíous jangle thus:
'This was a sudden love. How might it be
That she so lightly[1] lovèd Troilus
Right for the firstè sightè? Yea, parde!'
Now who so sayeth, so mote he never thee![2]
For everything of ginning[3] hath it need,
Ere all be wrought withouten any drede.[4]

"For I say not that she so suddenly
Gave him her love, but that she gan incline
To like him first, and I have told you why;
And after that his manhood and his pine[5]
Made love within her hartè for to mine:
For which by process and by good servíce
He gat her love, and in no sudden wise."

It will be noticed that in this passage not only does Chaucer very naturally, and from the author's point of view very properly, represent the critic as jangling—that is, 'talking foolishly,' which of course he always does—but he also stigmatizes him as inspired by envy, as of course he always is. It is not the poet's only reference to the part this passion plays in affecting the judgment of men. At the conclusion of the short prefatory address to his son with which the treatise on the 'Astrolabe' opens, he is careful to disavow any pretence that the work was original. One reason he gives for the

[1] Easily. [2] Thrive. [3] Beginning. [4] Doubt. [5] Suffering.

acknowledgment of his obligation to others suggests an atmosphere of detraction, the existence of which he does not assert. "Consider well," he writes, "that I ne usurp not to have found this work of my labor or of mine engine.[1] I ne am but a lewd compilatour[2] of the labor of old astrologians, and have it translated in mine English only for thy doctrine;[3] and with this sword shall I slay envy." It is to be hoped, though it may reasonably be doubted, that his weapon effected the execution he desired.

Nowhere, however, are the sentiments of Chaucer about himself and his own reputation so clearly indicated as in two passages of the 'House of Fame'—a work in which he has given us the directest if not the fullest revelation of his personal feelings and of his ways of looking at life. One of these is towards the end of the poem. Though to some extent obscure, it is sufficiently clear to show that Chaucer appreciated fully his own position in literature, and that he purposed to keep within his own breast his personal opinion about it as well as his personal grievances. At the temple of the goddess a stranger is represented by the poet as having accosted him in a friendly way, and as having asked him if he had come thither in order to secure fame for himself. This is the answer given:

"'Nay, for soothè, friend,' quoth I,
'I came not thither, grant-mercý,[4]
For no such causè, by mine head!
Sufficeth me, as I were dead,
That no wight have my name in hand;
I wot myself best how I stand;

[1] Ingenuity. [2] Ignorant compiler. [3] Instruction. [4] Thank you.

For what I dree[1] or what I think,
I will myselven all it drink,
Certainly for the morè part,
As far forth as I can[2] mine art.'" 1873–1882.

If these lines may seem to indicate indifference, there is nothing of that sentiment in the more open expression of feeling upon the subject of criticism which occurs near the beginning of this same poem. There, in petitioning for the success of what he is about to write, he prays for all possible prosperity for those who think well of his work, and invokes every possible calamity upon him who misjudges it through malice, presumption, hate, scorn, envy, and all the other abstract nouns which the author from time immemorial feels warranted in imputing to the reviewer. Before describing his own dream, it is thus he expresses his wishes about the dreams of his two classes of readers or hearers:

"And He that mover is of all
That is and was, and ever shall,[3]
So give hem[4] joyè that it hear
Of allè that they dream to-year;[5]
And for to standen all in grace
Of here[6] loves, or in what place
That hem were liefest for to stand:
And shield hem from poverte and shand,[7]
And from unhap and each disease;
And send hem all that may hem please
That take it well and scorn it not,
Ne it misdeemen in here[6] thought
Through malicioús intentión.
And whoso through presumptión,

[1] Endure. [2] Know. [3] Shall be. [4] Them. [5] This year. [6] Their. [7] Disgrace.

Or hate, or scorn, or through envíe,
Despite, or jape, or villainy,
Misdeem it, pray I Jesus God,
Dream he barefoot or dream he shod,
That every harm that any man
Hath had sith that the world began,
Befall him thereof ere he sterve,[1]
And grant he mote it full deserve.
Lo, with right such a conclusión
As had of his avisión[2]
Crœsus, that was king of Lyde,
That high upon a gibbet died,
This prayer shall he have of me;
I am no bet[3] in charity. 76–108.

We can well conceive that a good deal of seriousness may have lurked under this jesting tone. It is reasonable to infer from this passage that, however conscious the poet may have been of his own greatness and of the feebleness of his foes, he had not been absolutely indifferent to their attacks. Certainly literature will be searched in vain for a more comprehensive blessing bestowed upon the enthusiastic admirer, or a more comprehensive curse launched at the head of the pestilent fault-finder. This half-humorous attack upon foes now forgotten is, indeed, a somewhat noteworthy incident in the contest that has always gone on between the small body of those who create literature and the large body of those who criticise what is created. There were, however, feelings, independent of what others said, that could not fail at times to affect the poet. It was inevitable that a presentiment of the transitoriness of his own

[1] Die. [2] Vision. [3] Better.

reputation should lie heavy on his heart in moments of depression. Dissatisfaction with what he had accomplished, which comes to all who accomplish anything, came certainly to him. The impression that it was time for him to retire, to give place to younger and better men, is very noticeable in the remarkable verses addressed to Scogan, in which he tells his friend that he shall write no more. Everything, he says, that has been written will disappear from memory, if not from existence. His, too, must be the fate that overtakes all. He has had his day, and in these lines he gives us to understand that he accepts without murmuring the common lot:

> "But all shall passen that men prose or ryme,
> Take every man his turn as for his time."

But Chaucer, though he has preserved the existence of the attacks that were made upon him, has preserved neither the names of his censurers nor the nature of their censure. Whatever the latter may have been, it is certainly different from that which has been current for the last two hundred years. It is the misfortune of our age that it has inherited a mass of ignorant criticism about the poet which has come by dint of repetition to be looked upon by many as essentially correct. It is in every respect purely conventional. Originated by men who read him without understanding him, it has continued to be repeated by men who do not take the preliminary step towards understanding him that is involved in reading him. It is not always exasperating. There are occasional exhibitions of ignorant depreciation which the poet himself could have read with equa-

nimity or with amusement. Nor need his admirers take this sort of criticism seriously to heart. It is obviously harmless because it is obviously silly. There exists, for illustration, a work written not many years ago, in which the author tells us that while no doubt in his time Chaucer was thought witty, scarcely any part of his writings "would raise a laugh at the present day, though they might a blush."[1] This remarkable statement occurs in a production which professes to give a history of English humor. It is the only original passage in the course of two volumes that is itself open to the suspicion of being humorous.

Of the conventional estimates that are current the most irritating to the genuine student of the poet is the contrast that is perpetually drawn to his discredit between him and some one else. He has not this man's depth, that man's height, the other man's breadth, and all the rest of the vague comparisons dear to that cheap criticism which delights in telling us what an author is not, instead of what he is. The writer to whom he is most usually brought forward to serve as a foil is Shakspeare. No better selection could have been made to show the folly of this sort of contrast. Still, the constant juxtaposition and opposition of the two names render it worth while to point out the essential differences between these two men of genius, and the gross impropriety of setting them off against each other. No comparison, in truth, can be made between them. Shakspeare is essentially a dramatic poet. He identi-

[1] *History of English Humour*, by the Rev. A. G. K. L'Estrange, vol. i., p. 224.

fies himself so thoroughly with his characters that his own identity disappears. There is no other author in our speech, perhaps not in any speech, whose personality is so little prominent in his writings. He has been supposed, and with equally good reason, aristocrat and democrat, royalist and republican, Protestant and Roman Catholic, seaman, lawyer, anything and everything which it occurs to addled brain to concoct or perverse ingenuity to suggest. Even his sonnets which purport by their nature to be revelations of himself, and which might be expected to tell us with certainty something about his own personal feelings and fortunes, offer so little ground for positive inference or even rational conjecture that the heart of their mystery still remains unplucked. With Shakspeare the dramatic instinct has wholly excluded the personal. He loses himself in every character he portrays. The interest is never once turned aside from the thing created to the creator.

On the other hand, Chaucer is a great narrative poet. In this respect he has no equal in our tongue. But the qualities that go to form the narrative poet are quite distinct from those which enter into the composition of the dramatic. The story-teller himself is never in the background. We hear with his ears, we see with his eyes, we judge with his judgment. Chaucer's success as a narrative poet is largely due to the ease and fulness with which he makes us enter into his own thoughts and feelings. Unlike the majestic impersonality of Shakspeare, who pictures for us the world while he shrouds himself in darkness, there is nothing more conspicuous in the 'Canterbury Tales' than the individu-

ality of their composer. Nor is this peculiar to them. All of Chaucer's writings are so full of himself, and even of references to himself, that there is no early author of whose sentiments and ways of looking at life we get so clear and vivid an impression. He is so far from being merged in his characters that he holds himself aloof from them; he describes them, he analyzes them, he criticises them. They stand out under his drawing sharp, clear, distinct. But it is he that reveals them to us; they do not, as in the drama, reveal themselves. He has, to be sure, as any great writer must have, the dramatic faculty to this extent, that he purposes to have everything substantially in keeping. He gave his personages, or at least purposed to give them, stories precisely suited to their different characters. But in everything they say his own views are reflected, his own individuality is asserting itself. He never intrudes himself offensively; but we are always conscious of his presence. We know his opinions about alchemy, as accurately as if he had written a special treatise upon the subject. Had it been safe for him to express himself fully and plainly, there is little reason to doubt that we should have had a clear conception of the views he took of the great religious controversies that were going on in his time, and should have learned definitely where his sympathies lay.

Differences of this nature existing both in the character of the men and in the character of their work render any comparison between Chaucer and Shakspeare not merely unfruitful, but improper. Minor poets bear often a close resemblance; but rarely, indeed, do two great writers

stand in any such relation to each other as to permit the satisfactory application of criticism of this sort. Dryden and Pope are certainly the only ones in our literature who lend themselves easily to it. Still, it is a kind of comment to which all authors are and have been subject. It is therefore irritating in this special instance, not because Chaucer is the only one to whom it has been applied, but because it is so regularly applied to him for the sake of depreciating his actual achievement. Far more false and misleading, however, is the criticism which has concerned itself with his art, his knowledge of it, and his proficiency in it. This is an inheritance from the century that followed the Restoration. The traditions of that age now meet with unqualified scorn when directed to other writers. They merit the same treatment when directed to Chaucer. They receive it from those who are familiar with his writings. But they still continue to dominate the views of that vast body of cultivated men who are content to take their ideas about the poet at second-hand. The consequence is that the phrases current in the eighteenth century continue yet to be repeated. They did then represent a certain degree of honest, if unintelligent, belief, because they were based upon the opinions of those supposed to know. Now, so far as they have any foundation at all, they are based upon the opinions of those who are known not to know.

I throw out of consideration the views of men, even of men of ability, who have been disposed to depreciate Chaucer without having read apparently a line of his writings. Sentiments of the kind they express were

much more common a short time ago than now. They can be trusted to die out of themselves without help from any outside quarter. It is the views of a certain class of persons who did and do read the poet with some sort of appreciation and with some sort of knowledge that need examination at this point. The sentiments they entertain, to whatever cause due, do not therefore arise from indifference. It is the question of his art that comes here under consideration. It was long a common belief, even with his admirers, that in regard to that Chaucer stood in a peculiar relation. The opinion held about him was substantially the following: He was great, but he was rude. He was a man of genius, but a barbarian. He was one of those inspired beings who by some supreme unconscious effort give birth to creations whose happiness they do not perceive and whose greatness they do not themselves appreciate. The laboring art of later times aspires in vain to reach the height which they have attained without apparent exertion. What they have succeeded in doing, it rarely equals, and finds it impossible to surpass. It studies them, it imitates them; it admits their superiority, but consoles itself with the belief that, while they excel in power, they fail in art.

This was the cant of criticism once current about Shakspeare. We have freed ourselves from it in regard to him. But the burden which has fallen from his back has been transferred to the shoulders of Chaucer. It is he who now appears in the rôle of the inspired barbarian. By many this view is looked upon as conveying a compliment rather than censure. Yet

to either praise or blame of this kind the early poet is not in the least entitled. Such an opinion of his character, widely as it has been entertained, is the farthest possible remove from fact. For if there is one thing in his case that is above other things the truth, it is that Chaucer is supremely the artist. His works are not the outburst of a mighty but savage genius which produces results it cannot tell how, and that fails to understand the greatness it has created. Both in matter and in manner he was a conscious worker. What he accomplished was accomplished deliberately. By being done deliberately it is not meant that it was done slowly. It is merely that it was the achievement of one who comprehended his own intellectual gifts, calculated his own resources, and calmly set to work to give form and being to the creations he had in mind. This self-knowledge, this self-consciousness, can be traced in the gradual development of his powers. Genius such as was Chaucer's ordinarily has no beginning. When once the man has arrived at maturity, its manifestations are apt to be wholly independent of age. Yet it was inevitable that a writer in his position, with no native models to follow, could hardly hope to reach the perfection of his art at a bound. True it is that only in a general way do we know about the time of the production of his works. Still, even that general knowledge is ample enough to make evident that the skill of the poet was not only a growth, but that it was a conscious growth. For it is not alone what he did in his art, but what he thought about it, that will appear in the course of the following pages. From these it will become plain that

the same questions which constantly present themselves now for adjudication were then just as fully before the minds of men; that then, as now, there were schools which held widely divergent opinions about the matters under discussion; and that upon these matters Chaucer had views as definite and pronounced as the newest critic in the oldest review, who, strong with the accumulated wisdom of the ages, has for the thousandth time settled decisively all the points involved.

I started out with the assertion that Chaucer was supremely the artist. He was the artist in the fabrication of his verse as well as in the construction of his plot and the telling of his story. In both these respects his work shows a regular advance, wherever we can test it with any certainty by its date of composition. The story of his literary life is, in fact, a story of steady growth, in which he gradually rose superior to the taste of his time, proved all things, found out that which was true, and held fast to that which was good. This applies to the technical part of his work as well as to the more purely poetical. The latter will be conceded even by those who have but a limited acquaintance with his writings. Not so the former. What he accomplished there is unknown to most, and, for some unexplained reason, seems scarcely to have attracted the attention of any. In the various eulogistic tributes that have been paid to the poet, it is rare that it has received even cursory notice. In none of them has it ever been credited with its full significance. This must be the justification for treating it with a fulness of detail that will leave no room either for doubt or denial.

The well-worn assertion made in regard to Augustus Cæsar that he had found Rome brick and had left it marble must once more do duty as exemplifying the relation which Chaucer bears to the development of English versification. No writer of our speech has contributed a greater share than he to the vast variety of ryme. This fact of itself disposes of the charge that he was merely a barbarian of genius. What he did could not well have been accomplished by any one for whom poetry, looked at purely as an art, had not a special attraction. We can, indeed, easily attach a value to mere feats of ryming which they in no way deserve. To have composed verses in half a dozen different measures never used before is no proof of the poetical inspiration of the writer. But there is nothing violent in the inference that it does argue his interest in the art of versification, and no mean proficiency in its practice. It may, indeed, and sometimes does, show much more. A high degree of credit must be given to the inventor or first introducer of a metrical form which accommodates itself so readily and completely to the genius of a tongue that it becomes a general vehicle which poetical activity is naturally inclined to employ. This is one of the supreme tests by which the greatness of a poet as a conscious artist must be tried. So much at least can be said of it at an early period in the literary history of any people. It is therefore a criterion by which the character of Chaucer can be fairly put to proof. We have a right to ask if he had the ability to create methods of expression possessed of vitality so enduring that they have successfully survived the ordeal which time and

trial impose. It is in the answer that must be made to this question that his proficiency in poetry as a product of art, and not merely of inspiration, asserts itself pre-eminently. The permanence of the work he wrought is the triumphant vindication of the insight which recognized existing defects, and of the judgment that applied the remedy. The results he achieved have not been surpassed by any who came after him, and have perhaps in their entirety been equalled by none.

For we must consider, as I have had occasion to remark more than once before, the circumstances in which Chaucer was placed in his relation to the language and the literature. In the matter of versification, he was both a reformer and an inventor. For at whatever period we choose to date his first attempts at composition, there will be no difference of view as to the position in which he found himself. He was possessed of genius. But to the man possessed of genius there was in the English of that time no adequate vehicle for expression. The technical forms which the modern writer finds ready made in abundance had then no existence. These either had to be developed from the crude forms already existing, or borrowed from those prevailing in more highly cultivated tongues, or created outright. Nor, with the exception of some of the producers of the scanty lyric poetry of the previous century, does there seem to have been any idea of harmony save of the rudest kind. This condition of things had the inevitable result of putting Chaucer in the position of one who dealt with the art of poetry largely as an art. It practically compelled him to resort to untried methods

for its development. We can concede that what he did was a matter of necessity; but that did not make his work any the less easy, nor does it diminish the credit to which he is entitled for the success with which he met.

When Chaucer began the practice of poetical composition, it may be roughly said that there were three kinds of verse in common use. There are, indeed, many productions which would not fall under any one of the heads about to be described. Some of them, too, are works of great length, as, for instance, the 'Chronicle' of Robert of Gloucester. Still, the metrical forms employed in them cannot be said to have been in common use, in spite of their use by individual writers. It is only these three, therefore, that need to be considered here. The first was the ancient alliterative verse, the original metrical form of the poetry of the Teutonic race in all its branches. It was a favorite of the men who spoke the dialect of the North, and held its place in that quarter till the sixteenth century. Its greatest representative work—the 'Vision of Piers Plowman'—was the production, however, of a man of the South and a contemporary of Chaucer. There was, in the second place, the ryming verse, more or less joined with alliteration, which was mainly given up to the recitals of tales of adventure and the impossible deeds of mythical knights. These were in stanzas of different numbers of lines as well as of lines consisting of a different number of syllables in the same stanza. But, however different in detail, there was between all these productions a family likeness. It extended to the structure of the verse

and to the nature of the story. It has been said that the poems of this class had degenerated at the time Chaucer wrote. This is hardly true. They had never fallen because they had never risen. None of them represented a grade of achievement from which much degeneration was possible. At that period no man of genius had ever made use of the form in which they appeared. As it adapted itself, however, with fatal facility to sing-song, it had been from the outset seized upon and made the prey of the whole pack of poetical versifiers, who cared little for what they wrote if it only rymed and rattled easily. The consequence was that it had become associated with, and almost consecrated to, purely mechanical work. It was especially characterized by a certain number of phrases lugged in, whether appropriate or not, to fill out the measure or to preserve the ryme. A fair specimen of it can be seen in the tale of Sir Thopas, in which Chaucer exemplified the style, and took occasion to put into the mouth of the Host a very vigorous opinion of the character of the production it typified.

In no case did the poet make a serious attempt to write in either of the measures just described. The short tale composed in the one was only for the sake of discrediting the verse it employed. The other was something apparently foreign to his tastes. The superiority of ryme to alliterative verse had caused the latter to be abandoned among all the Teutonic nations. Chaucer himself was too great an artist as well as too wise a man to intrust the expression of his ideas to a decaying form. Outside of these two there was but one measure of first

importance. This was the octosyllabic verse. It was a favorite in his time, and was perhaps the most widely employed of any, especially for narrative purposes. It had qualities, too, which have always led to its use in English versification. It is reasonable to suppose that Chaucer began with the practice of it, though this is something that we can never positively know. That he continued to employ it down to a somewhat late period in his literary career is almost certain. It is equally certain that he learned early to recognize its insufficiency. It could be easy and animated; but volume, sonorousness, majesty, these were qualities it could rarely, if ever, attain. The ryme was "light and lewed," he tells us in one place, and it could be made agreeable; but outside of a certain limited range it was not capable of great effects. Moreover, it had always a tendency to degenerate into mere doggerel. To guard against this ever-besetting danger required an effort of attention on the part of the writer to the demands of which genius itself was not always able to respond. The tediousness of the monotony it could assume when it fell into the hands of a man who did not possess genius, no reader of the more than thirty thousand lines of the 'Confessio Amantis' needs to be told.

In place of this, Chaucer introduced the line of ten syllables, the present English heroic couplet. The language applied to both these metrical forms is strictly true, it ought to be said, of modern usage rather than of ancient. It is technically more proper to call the one a line of five accents and the other a line of four; for in the earliest periods there was often an unaccented extra

syllable at the end of each. This, however, is not a matter of importance in the present discussion, and needs here nothing more than a reference. That no one before Chaucer's time had consciously used the decasyllabic line at all, cannot be said. The writers of octosyliabic verse, little scrupulous about regularity, seem occasionally to have fallen into it by accident. It would be even too much to say that no one before Chaucer had ever used it for an entire poem; for it cannot be foreseen what the yet unprinted literature of the Middle Ages may come to reveal. Some men may have resorted to the measure by design, just as others would be occasionally betrayed into it by unskilfulness. There are productions of the fourteenth century, passages in which are open to the suspicion of having been composed in decasyllabic verse; at least that there was an intention to that effect on the part of the author. So rude and irregular, however, is its use that no certain inference of that nature could be drawn even in the case of a single line.

Still, facts of the kind asserted, and possibilities of the kind indicated, render it unsafe to maintain that Chaucer was, in one sense of the words, either the inventor or the introducer of the English heroic verse. In every proper sense he was. No one before him was aware of the capabilities that lay latent in the line, or was adequate to the task of developing them even if he had known. It is of little consequence, therefore, whether he borrowed the idea of it directly from some forgotten native writer, or had its adoption indirectly suggested to him by the observation he made of it, as it was exhibited in foreign tongues. What entitles him to the name of

its inventor is the fact that he was the first to reveal its capabilities. The verse of five accents that was in use before him, so far as it could be said to exist at all, was formless and void. It was without melody and without strength. It was Chaucer who gave distinction to the line. It was Chaucer who made it an instrument of expression such as the language had never possessed before. For the first time English literature had a vehicle for sustaining the loftiest and longest-sustained flights of the imagination, as well as for giving utterance to those pointed phrases that appeal to the intellect rather than to the soul. With its other measures it had been possible for it to show spirit and grace. Now it could not only show them to better advantage, but it was enabled, as never before, to impart dignity and power, and, above all, a majesty of movement which the octosyllabic verse was absolutely incapable of furnishing. From the poet's day to our own this has remained one of the most honored of English measures. The form, it is true, has undergone various modifications. The unaccented eleventh syllable now rarely appears. The termination of the sense with the second line of the couplet has supplanted the tendency to carry it on to the first line of the following couplet, which is a very marked peculiarity of the measure as it was used by Chaucer. But in all essential qualities it is the same that it was as it came from the hands of its creator in the fourteenth century. There is nothing to be compared to the influence it has wielded in literary history, unless we make an exception in favor of blank verse.

But the introduction of the heroic measure, though

the greatest single service that Chaucer rendered to English versification, was not the only one. Another was the creation of the seven-line stanza, with lines of five accents and with three rymes. This form is usually said to have been taken from the French. From the Italian *ottava rima* it differs only by the omission of the fifth line. Chaucer's invention of the measure—I use invention solely in reference to English poetry—has never been questioned. It was largely employed by him during the whole of his career. For a long time after it was one of the most widely employed of metrical forms. In popularity it exceeded at the outset the rymed couplet which has just been mentioned. The latter was comparatively little used for the two hundred years that followed Chaucer's death. The poems written in it, moreover, such as the 'Story of Thebes,' which Lydgate designed as a supplementary Canterbury tale, are as inferior in mechanical execution as they are in poetical spirit. The mastery of the rymed couplet seems, indeed, to have been much harder to acquire than that of the seven-line stanza, though we should naturally have expected the reverse to be the case. It is evident from the references made to the former measure in the sixteenth century that the men of that day had no conception of the great part it was to play, and soon to play, in English literature.

On the other hand, the seven-line stanza was a favorite one, perhaps it may justly be called the favorite one, with the immediate followers of the poet. Lydgate and Occleve use it very frequently. It is the measure to which James I. of Scotland resorted in the 'Kinges

Quair.' It is apparently from the fact of his employing it in that work that it received the name of "ryme royal." In it were composed also many of the spurious poems which came to be attributed to Chaucer. It continued to be a favorite measure for long productions and for productions on grave subjects. Among the many notorious, if not noted, works that were written in it may be mentioned Barclay's version of Brandt's 'Ship of Fools,' the greater portion of Hawes's 'Pastime of Pleasure,' and later still many of the dolorous pieces that make up the 'Mirror for Magistrates.' Its popularity, indeed, lasted to the close of the sixteenth century. If we can trust the critical essays of that period, it was held in distinctly higher estimation than the heroic verse which, from its use in the 'Canterbury Tales,' was then usually called "riding ryme." The latter was thought little suited for the majesty of the higher poetry. In the work which is usually ascribed to Puttenham, its inferiority to the seven-line stanza is clearly implied, though not absolutely asserted. Gascoigne expresses the common opinion.[1] "As this riding ryme," he remarked in 1575, "serveth most aptly to write a merry tale, so rhythm royal is fittest for a grave discourse." This comparative estimate had no foundation in reality. It naturally ceased to exist with the disappearance of one of the objects compared. For in spite of the temporary superiority accorded to it, and of its long-continued use, ryme royal had not the vitality of the heroic verse. After the introduction of the Spense-

[1] Gascoigne's *Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse or Ryme in English.*

rian stanza, the superior swell of that measure gave it a precedence which it has ever since retained.

It was in the three measures mentioned—the octosyllabic ryming couplet, the seven-line stanza, and the heroic couplet—that far the greatest part of Chaucer's poetry was written. It is also probable that the order just given is the one in which they were successively employed by him in his literary development, though this is something of which we can never be sure. It is certain that the order represents the comparative amount of his production in each that has been preserved, even if we include as his the extant translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Whether the existing fragment be the work of Chaucer, or of some one else, the English version which he made could hardly have failed to be like its original in the measure which was adopted. If, then, he translated the whole of it, his poetry in the octosyllabic verse would constitute in that case a much larger proportion of his entire production, and the largest proportion of the three forms employed. If we leave that out of the question, as in our uncertainty we are obliged to do, the result is what has just been stated. The amount of original matter is comparatively small which he produced in the form of verse that he found in fashion when he began to write. There are left us, in fact, but two independent poems in this measure—the 'Death of Blanche' and the 'House of Fame.' Together they fall a little short of thirty-five hundred lines. In the seven-line stanza he composed over fourteen thousand lines; in the heroic verse about sixteen thousand. As all of Chaucer's unquestioned poetry that is extant consists of

about thirty-five thousand lines, these figures make very clear how much of what he produced was in metrical forms of his own introduction or creation. He had doubtless found them after trial the ones best suited to the work he had set out to accomplish.

But it must not be supposed that the measures mentioned were the only ones that Chaucer attempted. There remain about fifteen hundred lines which exhibit an unusual diversity of metrical forms. Outside of any literary value they may have, they are of value as proving the interest the poet took in the purely technical side of his art. They exhibit the extensive experiments he made in the introduction or invention of new modes of poetical expression. They likewise evince his clear perception of the obstacles that stood in the way of their general use. The question of naturalizing foreign measures must have been a matter constantly before his mind. It was a burden almost thrown upon him by the anomalousness of the position in which he was placed. He stood at the beginning of a literature with very inadequate means of expression. The double duty rested upon him, therefore, not only of finding the matter he wished to convey, but the vehicle by which it could be best conveyed. Posterity has ratified the sagacity which led him to adopt finally the heroic couplet, the measure he most often employed in his later productions. He clearly came to look upon that metrical form as the one best suited to his own genius, if not to the genius of the language. But he pretty certainly came to that decision not instinctively, but as a conclusion drawn from observation and experience based upon the examination and

trial of other forms. The work he did in these, so far as it has been preserved, is itself convincing evidence of the extent to which the consciously artistic side of his nature was developed, in contradistinction to the purely poetical.

The first of these to be mentioned is the stanza of eight lines with three rymes. It was borrowed from the French. Though the number of lines is the same as in the *ottava rima*, the arrangement is different. It is, indeed, a verse of greater difficulty in itself, because every stanza contains four lines that ryme against the three of the Italian. The measure is used by Chaucer in about half a dozen poems. Two of them—the 'A B C' and the 'Former Age'—are among the very finest of his minor productions. Still, the most conspicuous as well as the longest instance of its use is in the Monk's tale. I suspect that it was partly the difficulty of the verse that led Chaucer to make his knight interrupt that lugubrious narrative, and not altogether the distastefulness of the subject. The number of lines he composed in this measure amounts to but a few over twelve hundred. Two of the pieces written in it are ballades, as we shall presently see.[1] In one of these two—the 'Complaint of Venus'—the arrangement of rymes is different from that which is found in all the other pieces that belong to this group.

Difficult as was this measure, there were others far more difficult that the poet attempted. In the 'Complaint of Mars,' as distinguished from the story that introduces it, he has used a stanza of nine lines with three

[1] See, however, Appendix to this volume.

rymes. These are divided in the proportion of four, three, and two. But it is in the 'Complaint of Anelida' in the poem of 'Anelida and Arcite' that he seems to have given a loose rein to his fondness for unusual metrical forms and for daring experiments in versification. Most of its fifteen verses are written in a nine-line stanza consisting of but two rymes. As if this did not present difficulty enough, he took care to introduce variations, none of which erred on the side of ease of production. One stanza has running through it but one ryme. Two other stanzas not only have the regular terminal ryme, but every line has in addition an internal ryme of its own, different from the terminal. There are, besides, two stanzas which consist of sixteen lines instead of the usual nine; but in spite of the increase that way, the number of rymes is not increased. They still remain but two.

Even these somewhat extraordinary examples of versification he surpassed elsewhere. At the end of the Clerk of Oxford's tale he has given us an envoy of six six-line stanzas. The peculiar thing about the conclusion to this poem is that in the thirty-six lines of which it is composed there are but two rymes. Almost as difficult a thing was accomplished by him in the two specimens he has left us of the ballades in eight-line stanzas. The one entitled the 'Complaint of Venus' is certainly a translation. The same statement is probably true of the other, which consists of a dialogue between Fortune and one complaining of her conduct. Both of these poems conform to the character of the French ballade. The stanzas are accordingly arranged in sets of three, and in each of the twenty-four lines there are but three

rymes. The difficulty is less, but only slightly less, in the ballades he produced in the stanza of seven lines. The three rymes, in this case, run through twenty-one lines. Of these, however, he has left us but few examples, and all of them are short poems.

There is a perhaps even more significant imitation of foreign measures than any of those which have been mentioned. Most of the pieces that Stow added to the edition of 1561 are not only worthless in comparison with other productions of the poet, but they are, moreover, worthless as poetry. This has led to the exclusion of nearly all of them from modern editions. To this general censure there are one or two exceptions. One of these is an imperfectly preserved poem which is introduced with the statement that "these verses next following were compiled by Geffray Chauser, and in the writen copies foloweth at the end of the Complainte of Petee." This is not of itself satisfactory evidence as to the genuineness of the production. But this particular piece has also been preserved in a manuscript written by the well-known copyist Shirley. By him it was expressly ascribed to the poet. From that it was printed in 1871 by Mr. Furnivall in the appendix to Part i. of the 'Odd Texts of the Minor Poems.' The internal evidence in its favor is, moreover, of the strongest character. It is full of Chaucer's favorite phrases, his peculiarities of diction, and his modes of thought. While it does not rank with his best productions, it is likewise by no means unworthy of his powers. That, however, which makes it specially interesting is not its greatness as a poem, but its metrical character. It opens with two stanzas in

the seven-line measure. It concludes with nine in a peculiarly complicated ten-line measure that is found nowhere else in his writings. There is, indeed, one stanza of ten lines in the dedicatory conclusion of the 'Complaint of Venus;' but that consists of but two rymes, while in this production there are four. The most remarkable peculiarity of the poem, however, is that the portion of it contained between the two kinds of stanza mentioned is a direct imitation of the Italian *terza rima*. It was pretty certainly the first, and apparently it long remained the only, attempt to naturalize that measure in English versification. The work was left in an imperfect state. It may never have been fully finished by its author. The chief value it has for us is the illustration it furnishes of the extent of the interest which Chaucer took in poetry as an art.[1]

No such difficult feats of versification have been attempted in our tongue by a poet of the first rank. They were not attempted in ignorance of what was involved in the task. Chaucer had a perfectly clear conception of the complex and artificial character of these measures and of the obstacles that stood in the way of their naturalization. That the number of rymes in our language is limited, that in consequence the resources for variation both of thought and expression are limited, was something which he recognized as plainly as the

[1] This production has been carefully edited and included by Prof. Skeat in his edition of *Chaucer's Minor Poems*, with a full account of its metrical peculiarities. From his work I have derived much of the information given above. It is, however, an oversight to speak of its ten-line stanza as having been afterwards employed in the *Complaint of Anelida*. In the *Academy* of July 13, 1889, he has also mentioned the discovery by Mr. Furnivall of a second manuscript copy of the poem, which contains an additional stanza to the one printed by him.

many modern experimenters in these metrical forms, who can call to their aid, as he could not, a ryming dictionary. He has not neglected to put upon record his feelings upon the subject. In the dedicatory envoy of his translation of the 'Complaint of Venus' he apologizes for its imperfection because his skill in writing had been impaired by the coming-on of old-age that had dulled his spirit. To this he added a comment upon the difficulty of reproducing in our tongue the artificial structure and involved arrangement of the original. "To me," he said,

> "It is a great penance,
> Sith ryme in English hath such scarcity,
> To follow word by word the curiosity[1]
> Of Gransoun, flower of hem[2] that make[3] in France."

The apology was hardly necessary. Age certainly had not much dulled the art, however much it may have daunted the spirit, of one who could successfully accomplish a feat of this kind.

There were doubtless other experiments made by Chaucer in English versification which have not come down to us. On this point we have his own testimony as well as that of his contemporaries. Besides ballades already mentioned, he asserts that he has written both roundels and virelays. But of these latter scarcely any have survived. None can be attributed to him with confidence, save the roundel first printed by Percy in his 'Reliques,' and the one contained in the 'Parliament of Fowls.' Even this latter is to be found in only a few of the manuscripts. Moreover, confidence may be felt

[1] Elaborate arrangement. [2] Them. [3] Write poetry.

that other things of the kind that have been attributed to him were not his composition. They certainly exhibit nowhere any trace of his genius. Had, however, all his shorter poems been preserved, there is reason to believe that we should have illustrations from his pen of almost every variety of metrical form which the restless activity and artistic spirit of the French authors had created. It is probable that poetry, as distinct from the poetic art, has not suffered any material loss by the disappearance of these attempts. Enough remain to establish the truth of Chaucer's claim for himself, and of the claim which has been made for him. They show conclusively that at that early period he had attained a skill in his art which places him in the front rank of metrists in the knowledge he displays and the mastery he had gained of mere technique. This is not necessarily a great achievement. It does satisfactorily prove—and this is all which at present concerns us—that his poetry was no mere product of inspiration which chooses without forethought the form in which it shall find expression. On the contrary, it was the result of both conscientious and concious study of his art as an art.

I have spent so much time in clearing away the rubbish that has accumulated upon this point for the sake of showing Chaucer's exact position in the matter, and not from any conviction that the matter is one of special importance. Most of his work, and his greatest work, was accomplished in comparatively simple measures. In this respect he is like all the world's mighty poets. It is possible that one reason why so few of his pieces in complex measures have survived is that he himself

may not have been specially solicitous about their preservation. Their composition may have been regarded by him as an amusement rather than a serious effort. In a tongue so deficient in ryme as ours he could hardly have failed to see that the merit of pieces of this nature will almost inevitably lie rather in the execution than in the sentiment, and furthermore that the merit of the execution consists largely in its difficulty. It is the poetry not of art, but of artifice, though often of artifice in a very high sense. The almost unavoidable consequence is that the production strikes us not as a birth, but as a manufacture. It is a manufacture, too, which is capable of being reproduced scores of times by scores of persons after once the secret of the device has been ascertained. Therefore we usually admire them, if we find them admirable at all, as feats of intellectual skill rather than as products of the inspired imagination. We find ourselves wondering at the ingenuity of the poet, little at the beauty of the poem. Accordingly, while we may be pleased, amused, or interested by it, rarely is it that we are stirred. The very orthodoxy of form, the mechanical correctness of the lines, the peculiar difficulty of the ryme, tend to give the piece an artificiality, an unnaturalness, a certain falsetto tone, the impression of which can only be overcome by genius of a high order, and not always by it. Work of this kind is, in truth, usually produced by men who are artists, and sometimes great artists, in poetry as distinguished from great poets. It is accordingly not so much what they say that interests us as the way in which they say it.

This is, to some extent at least, true of Chaucer's own

experiments in versification. These, it is fair to add, he was compelled by his position to make. By that fact he was placed at a certain disadvantage. He who at any time sets out to invent or to introduce new modes of poetic expression is under the necessity of paying a heavy price for his venture. What he gains in variety, he loses in spontaneity. This is the inevitable fatality that hangs over unusual metrical forms. The pioneer in these efforts must always sacrifice something because he is a pioneer. That he should be a pioneer was a necessity of Chaucer's situation. It is his distinction that to genius was added a mastery of his art so complete that the forms of verse of which he mainly made use proved so adequate for the purpose they were intended to serve that poetic expression seemed naturally to fall into them of its own accord. It was different with the other measures which at times he tried. His genius enabled him to give them in individual instances a charm which none of his successors could impart to similar productions of their own. With what exquisite skill he managed the ryme can be seen in a verse like this, in which a lover is represented as giving a description of his mistress:

"This is no feignèd matter that I tell;
My lady is the very source and well
Of beauty, lust,[1] freedom,[2] and gentlenéss,
Of rich array, how dearè men it sell,
Of all disport in which men friendly dwell,
Of love and play and of benign humblesse,
Of sound of instruments of'all sweetnéss,

[1] Delight. [2] Liberality.

And therto so well fortuned and thewèd[1]
That through the world her goodness is y-shewèd."[2]

There are whole poems of Chaucer written in these difficult measures which are on a uniformly high level of inspiration. But they are not numerous. Of the seven or eight ballades that have been preserved none reach the elevation of the poems that are written in the simpler metres. But these pieces will always have a special value for the positive proof they furnish that Chaucer was profoundly interested in the technique of his art. This is a matter that would never have been present to his thoughts at all, had he been merely the inspired barbarian that for a long period he had the reputation of being.

So much for this side of his poetic development. These various and sometimes daring experiments in versification would have raised Chaucer to a prominent position as a literary artist, even had his execution been much inferior to what it actually was. There is, however, nothing peculiar in the attention on his part to technique. In the construction of the plot, in the narration of the story, there is the same progressive development as in the mastery of the verse. Here, as before, we see the working of the conscious intellect, aware of its deficiencies, painfully perfecting its methods, and gaining felicity and strength with added knowledge and with advancing skill. The power he finally displayed was not the result of chance impulse or accidental inspiration. It came from prolonged and careful study. Even in the

[1] Endowed with good fortune and good morals.

[2] *Complaint of Mars*, lines 173–181.

matter of language, close examination reveals how great was the labor to attain the apparent absence of labor, to exhibit the clearness and happiness of expression which makes Chaucer one of the easiest of authors to be understood. The variations of the manuscripts are in many cases evidences of the care exercised by the poet. The changes, omissions, and additions must often have been his work. It is certainly safe to assert that the matter of revision was never absent from his thoughts. What he had to do constantly we can discover by what he occasionally left undone. The suspicion, in fact, forces itself upon the mind that some of his poems were never finished because he could not spare the time and labor required to mould them into a form satisfactory to his artistic conscience.

In one of his most famous pieces, the half-told tale of the Squire, he has incidentally given us an excellent opportunity to contrast his work as it appears in a completed state and as it appears in the process of completion. Of this tale but two parts were ever produced in any shape. But of these two it was the first alone that clearly received final revision. The contrast between them is striking. In the first part everything has been finished, to the minutest detail, with the perfection of the great master. For felicity of diction, for clearness of expression, it will compare favorably with any portion of the poet's work. There are no violations of grammatical rules. There are no obscurities of construction. There are no awkward transitions. On the other hand, the second part, while complete in its matter, is incomplete in its manner. The broad outlines are filled in

carefully throughout, and the interest of the story as a story is sustained to its conclusion. But in minor details it shows various defects. There are occasional lapses in its grammar. Lines are awkwardly interposed, breaking up the continuity of the thought. There are inconsistencies of statement that can only be explained by forcing the meaning of words in a way that Chaucer's completed work never demands. Sometimes efforts of any kind are ineffectual to secure this result. All these occasional inaccuracies show that this part was left by the poet in a comparatively crude state. It is easy to infer from this one example not only the pains he took in perfecting his language, but what would have been the result had he not taken the pains.[1]

This one example is sufficient to prove the truth of this view so far as regards clearness of expression. Is it

[1] As this is a question of some importance, it may be worth while to point out examples of these alleged inaccuracies. For a violation of grammar, see lines 368, 369. For the insertion of details in a way to break up the continuity of the narrative, see lines 357, 358. Inconsistencies of details are pretty frequent. They extend to ideas as well as facts. The falcon, for instance, is described as having beaten herself with her wings and torn herself with her beak. Sorrow for death and loss of love are the only two causes, Canace asserts, that could lead to a grief which manifested itself in this way. But in a line that shortly follows it is declared that it is either 'love' or 'dread' that must be the cause of this cruel deed. That, however, it cannot be dread is apparent from the fact stated almost immediately after, that the falcon has not been made an object of pursuit. The difficulty in the matter would vanish if we could suppose *drede* (line 447) to be an error of the scribe for *dede*, that is 'death.' But all the manuscripts that have been printed agree in reading *drede*. In a later passage Canace is represented as weeping constantly while the falcon told her story (lines 487, 488). Finally, the falcon bids her be quiet, and then with a sigh *begins* to tell her story, which has already been the cause of so many tears. In the first part the king's younger son, the brother of Canace, is called Cambalo (line 23). In the second he seems to appear as Cambalus (line 648). This would be of no consequence were it not that Cambalo appears later as fighting in the lists with the two brothers of Canace, one of whom is Cambalo, before he could win her (lines 659–661).

true of other and of higher things? Absolutely essential as clearness of expression is to the finest literary art, its presence would not of itself prove the existence of such literary art. Nor is that quality shown by the absence in the poet's writings of certain transgressions against taste which have been at various times prevalent in our literature. These, indeed, are worth noting. In the first place there are no violent conceits in Chaucer. He is likewise free from those verbal quibbles which characterize to so marked a degree the language of the greatest of the Elizabethan dramatists. The single instance in which he furnishes any noticeable example of this sort is the play upon the word "style" in the Squire's tale;[1] though there is possibly one of the same character in a line in 'Troilus and Cressida,' where it is said that

"This Calkas knew by calkulynge," i., 71.

that Troy was to be taken. Still, from conceits of all kinds and of all grades Chaucer's language, at every period of his literary career, was in general wholly free. In this matter he occupied, apparently from the very beginning, the highest plane. Not so, however, with the constructive skill he displayed. In the framing of his plot, in the method of telling his story, and in its orderly development from the beginning to the end, he shows everywhere signs of steady advance. With the exception of the poem of 'Troilus and Cressida,' upon which he evidently bestowed special care, and in the writing of which he had before him an exemplar, his earlier works

[1] "Al be it that I can not soune his style,
Ne can not clymben over so hy a style."—Lines 97, 98.

exhibit decided deficiencies when contrasted with the best of his later ones. They frequently contain as fine passages. It is in their completed effect that they fail. And this failure is due to the disregard of certain details of construction which were essential to the perfection of the work as a whole. The lack of these would be sure in time to impress itself upon the attention of one in whom the artistic sense was constantly becoming more developed. That it did so in the case of Chaucer we have ample evidence.

Let us take for consideration three of the most important of the earlier productions—the 'Death of Blanche the Duchess,' the 'Parliament of Fowls,' and the 'House of Fame.' All of these have certain traits in common. The ending in the case of the first two is so abrupt that it gives the impression that the author left off, not because he had got through with what he started out to say, but because he was too tired to go on. There is a sense of incompleteness about the two poems which detracts from their perfection as works of art. We are hardly justified in making the same assertion about the 'House of Fame,' as it is itself unfinished. Yet it seems probable, from the length to which the third book, avowedly the last one, had already attained, that this poem would have exhibited the same peculiarity. Moreover, all of the three are clogged with extraneous material. They introduce long passages, not because they are germane to the subject, but because they are interesting to the writer. In the 'Death of Blanche' the story of Ceyx and Alcyone is told from Ovid. In the 'Parliament of Fowls' we have from Cicero the

'Dream of Scipio,' in an abridged form. In the 'House of Fame' there is given an abstract of the story of the Æneid. Not one of these has any vital connection with the main subject. The poet himself makes no pretence to that effect, though others have occasionally taken the pains to do it for him. In two of these instances he is reading the very book from which he quotes. That is the only reason indicated for relating what has been found in it. Obviously if he had been reading some other book, he would have had some other story to tell or some other favorite passage from a favorite author to embody. In his later work there is but little of this, and this little is never so prominent. The occasional exceptions due to a desire to display his learning will be considered later. But, as a general rule, it can be said that he finally worked himself out of the disposition to insert passages not because they were appropriate to the story, but because for some reason they had attracted his attention and regard. There are, indeed, frequent digressions in his best later work; but they arise naturally, and they are not protracted. They do not interfere with the progress of the narrative. They are rather like the incidents and observations in which a good story-teller indulges, who feels that he has absolute command of his audience, and permits himself a certain amount of by-play to prolong or enhance the interest of what he is saying.

These are conclusions which we reach inevitably after any careful examination of Chaucer's practice. From such an examination we are entitled to infer that the change in his methods did not have its origin in acci-

dent. It was due to a steady developing knowledge of his art. This increase of knowledge was therefore the result of study and reflection. But in judging of his intellectual growth as a literary artist we are not limited to inferences drawn from his practice. His own words will often furnish us with the clearest and most definite information as to the views he entertained, both in the matter of expression and of material. In this self-revelation he is, perhaps, most conspicuously opposed to the early poets with whom he is ordinarily ranked. There is, of course, a certain degree of justice in such a classification. Chaucer is an early poet. It is inevitable, in consequence, that he should display some of the characteristics of this class, whether they assume the nature of merits or of defects. The traits which distinguish all of them who possess genius are plainly his. Like them, he is perfectly simple. What he has to say, he says in a thoroughly natural manner, without the slightest attempt to produce an impression. There are no devices used to stimulate attention beyond the legitimate ones which belong to the telling in the best way what is to be told. Like the early writers, also, he is simple in the sense of being clear. No one who understands his words or his references has any hesitation about his meaning. Verse which is perplexing, not on account of the depth of thought, but of the obscurity of expression, is never the characteristic of an early writer who has the gift of genius. In this respect Chaucer stands like them upon the permanent as opposed to the transient. Poetry has failed of its mission when its language, like that of diplomacy, is used to conceal thought. There is no enduring vitality

in that kind of it which it requires a special education to appreciate. Moreover, Chaucer stands upon the permanent as opposed to the transient in the attention he pays to form. The revolt against the regular and harmonious which occasionally overtakes an age cloyed with melody leads it to delight for a time in uncouth measures and harsh lines, and to look upon jerkiness and ruggedness as being somehow a display of force or a return to nature. But the taste for it can never have anything more than the permanence of a fashion. If a man of genius, such, for instance, as was Donne, exemplifies the practice in any way, his reputation is sensibly diminished by it in the long run. In truth, if it survives at all, it is in spite of the ruggedness which was affected, and not because of it. For if artificial melody becomes wearisome, uncouthness is felt in process of time to be unendurable.

Chaucer, therefore, like all great early poets, is simple, is clear, is melodious. While this is true, it is also true that the simplicity of Chaucer is by no means the simplicity of the poet who belongs to the dawn of civilization. It may not be any the less natural, but it is far more directly the result of conscious art. I have had occasion in discussing his religious beliefs to point out that the attitude he occupied towards matters of the kind is rather that of the modern man than of the man of the Middle Ages. The childlike faith of the early time is entirely gone. In place of it appears the cool, critical judgment that will accept nothing that does not fully commend itself to the reason. But the same statement can be made of him with equal truth in his attitude

towards literature. In respect to it he is equally a modern. There is about his method of work nothing of that blind creative impulse which, acting without reflection, characterizes, or is supposed to characterize, the poet of the earliest period. On the contrary, he knows precisely what he is aiming to accomplish. He has his attention steadily directed towards the best method of doing it. When he fails, it is not because he has not considered the matter. It is because he has been misled, either by the taste of his age or by the bad models he has set before himself. He has all the self-consciousness of the creative genius of later times, who has mastered his art as well as been mastered by it. He has precise and definite views about it. He criticises and condemns not only tendencies in others, but tendencies in himself that conflict with what he has come to regard as essential to the development of his own power of expression in its purest and most perfect form.

That this was so we learn from the testimony which Chaucer himself furnishes. That it should be so was an almost unavoidable consequence of the training in his art which he had received, and the characteristics by which as a writer he is personally distinguished. At the outset the simplicity which belonged to him by right as an early poet was modified by two agencies—one general, one individual. Chaucer is the inheritor of literary traditions which influence him always, and at times dominate him entirely. A share he has in the intellectual wealth of the past. With it he assumes its responsibilities, and to a large extent adopts its methods of arrangement and points of view. But there is something

more personal than this to be noted. There is in his utterances a subjective element which is quite lacking in the early writer, strictly so called. With the latter the author sinks out of sight entirely. The hero is the one to whose feelings and fortunes our attention is exclusively directed. It is upon the matters in which he is concerned that our eyes are fixed. This is not due to the fact that the early writer is specially dramatic in his nature. It is simply because he has a story of another to tell, and it never occurs to him that any views of his own ought to be brought into prominence, or even into notice. But Chaucer, as has already been pointed out, introduces himself persistently. It is not the way that things strike the hero of the story that present themselves for consideration, but the way they strike the narrator. Now, there can be absolute simplicity in this, and it will depend upon the character and genius of the writer whether it adds to or detracts from the interest of the work in which it is displayed. But it is not the simplicity of the early poet. It lacks directness. It diverts the reader's mind, if only momentarily, from the story itself to the views entertained by the story-teller.

One result of all this is that Chaucer stands constantly in a critical attitude towards his own art. This is a position which it would have been impossible for the writer of a very early period to occupy. It is not merely that his treatment of his subject is affected by it unconsciously. He is thinking constantly about the proper handling of it. He comments upon it frequently. We see this exemplified even in the matter of language.

He is ready to satirize himself when for any reason he finds that he has yielded to a tendency which strikes him as failing to conform to the requirements of what the severest canons of taste demand. The great writer who belongs to the earliest period is usually saved from any indulgence in the commonplace or the bombastic by the presence of genius. But if he inadvertently falls into either one of these faults, it is because they do not seem to him faults. But Chaucer's freedom from lapses of this sort is due largely and perhaps wholly to the critical attention which he pays to his own utterances. If he detects in himself any tendency towards fine writing, or towards the repetition of the commonplace, he is not in the least disposed to mistake it for inspiration or for wisdom. It is curious, indeed, to observe at times the way in which, under such circumstances, he abruptly holds himself up, and makes a half-sarcastic comment upon his own performance. In the Franklin's tale we are told, in the description of an entertainment, that

> "Suddenly begunnè revel new,
> Till that the brightè sunnè lost his hew,
> For the orizont hath reft the sun his light." 287–289.

This way of mentioning that the sun has set strikes the poet, on second thought, as an altogether too elaborate and artificial description of a familiar fact. He accordingly brings himself and the reader back to his usual simplicity of style, almost with a shock, by adding the ironical explanation,

> "This is as much to say, as it was night."

In the same manner, in the tale of the Nun's Priest, he observes,

"God wot that worldly joy is soon ago."[1] 386.

The commonplaceness of the remark impresses itself upon him as soon as it is uttered. He proceeds to enlarge upon that fact, not only with reference to what he has just been saying himself, but also with a possible reference to some other writer, in the following lines:

"And if a rhetor[2] couldè fair endite,
He in a chronique safely might it write
As for a sovereign notability."[3]

It may excite surprise in the minds of some, still more or less affected by the ideas of the old criticism, to hear it maintained that freedom from prolixity is another characteristic which differentiates Chaucer from all early poets save those of the very highest grade. It may excite surprise because prolixity has been a fault commonly attributed to him. It has been sometimes admitted by his professed admirers, or at least received without protest. Yet the charge is not only without foundation, it is the very reverse of the truth. It has arisen from his improper introduction of extraneous matter which has already met with some consideration, and will meet with more. This is a fault of constructive skill, but it is not a fault of expression. Prolixity characterizes the style of the man who is unable to grasp the distinction between the essential and the non-essential in the details of what he has to say. It is the besetting sin of most early writers, even of those who

[1] Gone. [2] Writer. [3] Observation worthy of note.

attain to a rank but little below the first. These set before themselves great tasks and execute them unflinchingly. The one feeling, the inspiration of which never fails them, the one duty incumbent upon them which is never disregarded, is to make their productions as long as possible. In the narration of events they have little or no idea of selection. No incident is too trivial to be left unrecorded, no detail is too insignificant to be unnoticed.

The course that Chaucer pursues is exactly the opposite. The one distinguishing trait which makes him the great story-teller of the English language is that he seizes upon the central points of interest, and lets everything go by that does not contribute to the effectiveness of their representation. If a charge of diffuseness could be maintained against any of his works, it would be 'Troilus and Cressida.' It might be admitted even by its admirers that it lacked compression. There are not in it, moreover, any of those vivid passages which supremely arrest the attention, such, for instance, as are found in the Knight's tale. But if the demand were made upon the most censorious critic for a selection of parts to be cut out or compressed, he would with the exception of two passages be sorely embarrassed in the task of pointing them out. The poem is never tedious. It moves on with equable flow from beginning to end, with diversity of incident, with plenty of delicate observation, and with an extraordinary display of keen insight into the various ways in which the passion of love manifests itself in different natures. Though protracted, it is not prolix, for, except in the two passages yet to be

considered, it never wanders away from the legitimate development of the incidents of the tale that is to be told.

It was unquestionably an intellectual virtue for the poet to resist diffuseness in an age when the fear the reader had of a work was never due to its length. In those days of ample leisure, men, as a rule, did not dream of being in a hurry. It was only the very thoughtful among them that looked upon time as a possession to be prized. Brevity was so far from being expected that it was not even desired. It seems as if in that age of few books the author had not only to resist the promptings of human nature to be long-winded, but the solicitations of his fellow-men to the same effect. In this very poem of 'Troilus and Cressida,' Chaucer, on one occasion, seems to have felt himself under obligation to apologize for his inability or unwillingness to respond to the expectation that some would entertain that he should rehearse every word his two lovers spoke, every message that passed between them, and even every change that came over their countenances.[1] The course he took in refusing to introduce the non-essential was not the result of whim or accident. It came from the exercise of his own critical judgment. He is full of references to the necessity of avoiding details which were then regularly expected in a narrative of the kind he was writing. He not unfrequently mentions a number of subjects in regard to which he goes on to declare that he will not relate them. On several occasions he gives the reason of his refusal. "It is no fruit, but loss of

[1] iii., 491.

time," he says in the Squire's tale. Expressions of a similar nature can be found scattered through his writings. These recurring references to the necessity of avoiding prolixity show that the matter was constantly before his thoughts. Among our early writers Chaucer seems to me the only one who had the slightest conception of the value of time.

It is clear from his practice of disembarrassing his story from everything that did not add to the effect, that the poet had come to comprehend fully the principle that in art the half is greater than the whole. But this same discerning judgment, steadily developing with his intellectual growth, which enabled him to perceive what was permanent and what was transient in taste, what was proper and what was improper in expression, is even more strikingly seen in the choice of his subjects than in their treatment. In the 'Canterbury Tales,' in particular, we meet not only with the highest exhibition of his creative genius, but with the final conclusions he had reached in his critical survey of literature and of literary methods. In his time there existed a certain class of works which had once been pre-eminently popular. These were the 'gestes,' the tales that dealt with the adventures of knights and heroes. They had constituted the main staple of the imaginative literature which the men of the poet's immediate past had been wont to read. There were capabilities in these stories. In the hands of a man of great genius they might have been lifted up into a poetical atmosphere which would have made of some of them imperishable creations. Their composition had fallen into the hands of versifiers,

with the result that their production had become a mechanical operation. It relied entirely upon the use of certain well-worn incidents, and of certain measures that had become wearisome to the literary sense by their monotonous movement. Their invariable tediousness was furthermore aggravated by the perpetual repetition of a certain set of jingling phrases. It is evident that Chaucer had for them the same sentiment of contempt that Fielding expressed for the long-drawn-out romances which had been the favorites of the generations preceding his own. Their matter and manner were both satirized by him in the tale of Sir Thopas which he put in his own mouth. We need not give Chaucer too much credit for the depreciatory estimate which he placed upon poems of this kind. Their race was already run. The very fact that his own sentiments about them were attributed by him to a man of inferior social position is fairly certain proof that in the criticism that was made he did no more than reflect what was coming to be a common opinion, if not the common opinion. These productions, doubtless, still retained something of the popularity they once enjoyed. But the popularity was pretty certainly confined to men of a low grade of intellectual development. What was, or was becoming, the prevalent feeling was adequately depicted in the rough words of the Host. He stops Chaucer in his narrative, and tells him that his ears ache because of his "drasty speech," and that such a sort of ryme as he is perpetrating he commits to the devil. If, therefore, we accept the poet as our authority for the view that was generally entertained, we cannot insist that in this re-

spect his taste was much superior to that of his time. All that can be said with certainty is that his words are evidence that he had outgrown, and that his contemporaries were outgrowing, the fondness that had once existed for the mechanical versification and absurd matter of these productions.

But there was another species of composition to which the men of Chaucer's age were exceedingly addicted. These were the stories of the kind called tragedies. They detailed the fortunes of men who had once been in position and power and had fallen from their high estate. These were exactly in the taste of the time. The fondness for them was something that had manifested itself before Chaucer came upon the stage. It lasted long after he had passed away. They formed the subject of perhaps the most noted of Boccaccio's Latin treatises, the one upon the misfortunes of illustrious men and women. Early in the fifteenth century this popular production was rendered into English by Lydgate from the French version. His translation was one of the works that were rescued from manuscript within a short time after the introduction of printing. Several editions of it, moreover, appeared during the sixteenth century. This one fact shows the continuance of the taste which had in the first place begotten these dolorous stories. Their popularity culminated in our literature with the 'Mirror for Magistrates,' and apparently died with the production of that work. There is no question that at first these tragical tales appealed to Chaucer as strongly as they did to his contemporaries. They had, indeed, for him the special attraction

that they were pathetic in their nature; and he could hardly have been unaware that in the representation of scenes of that kind he was possessed of peculiar power. But it is equally certain that he learned to appreciate the unwisdom of composing and bringing together productions of the sort on any large scale. A single story of the kind is often interesting. A small number of them can be made so by a man of exceptional ability. But when it comes to the recital of scores and even hundreds of them, the greatest genius would find it impossible to make their depressing details permanently endurable. Though Chaucer fell at first under the influence of the dominant taste, he did not continue under it long. His clear critical perception put him speedily in advance of his contemporaries. It led him to recognize the fact that there was no genuine vitality in productions of this sort. They were false to the truth of life, and therefore false to the truth of art.

His final conclusion we see exemplified in his great work. In it the Monk's tale is introduced as a specimen of these collections of stories, and largely and perhaps entirely for the sake of satirizing, or at least of censuring, the taste that created and enjoyed them. The censure is conveyed in the strongest form. It is noticeable also that the criticism comes from the mouth of two widely different characters. It is the Knight who interferes to suppress the lugubrious narratives of the Monk. He has heard as many of them as he can stand. This feeling, in which is represented the highest cultivation of the community, is re-echoed by the representative of its rough common-sense. The Host adds

his depreciatory estimate in still stronger language. Here it will be observed that the parts which these personages play in the condemnation of this tale are largely different. It is the Knight who objects to the matter it contains. His distaste for the narratives brought together in it is based upon their uniformly dolorous character. It gives him no pleasure, he says, to hear of men's misfortunes. On the contrary, it is always a satisfaction to learn of their success. If the Knight, one of whose chief characteristics is his unfailing courtesy, dislikes the manner in which the stories are told, he keeps his unfavorable opinion to himself. Upon that point it is the Host who undertakes to enlighten the Monk. This genuine prototype of the modern reviewer in the eyes of the modern author has no hesitation in telling the reciter of the tale the brutal truth in the most brutal way. It was not only a pain, he informs him, to hear these dismal stories, it was a bore. To the monotony of misery which they narrate is added a sustained tediousness in the narration. With engaging critical frankness, the Host gives the Monk to understand that what he is recounting is an annoyance to all the company. It is so wearisome, that were it not for the jingling of the bells that hung from the relater's bridle, he himself would have gone off into sleep. No one dissents from the view expressed. The Monk in turn refuses to accede to the proposition to tell a tale of a different character to a company which has shown itself incapable of appreciating the high intellectual repast which he had prepared for it.

This is a clear and definite statement by Chaucer of

his opinion of productions of this nature. Modern criticism, which would say the same thing, could say no more, and could say it no more vigorously. But that this feeling was a growth on the poet's part we can ascertain by going back to a period in his career when it did not exist with him at all. More than this, we can go back to a period in which he was still swayed by the taste he came in time to censure. We can even go back to the very work written under its influence, and observe during the progress of its composition the change that was gradually coming over his opinions. It is in the 'Legend of Good Women' that we can trace the alteration in his point of view. This, as we all know, was an unfinished poem. Chaucer had contemplated the writing of at least as many as nineteen or twenty lives, and possibly of many more. He actually gives us but nine. Lydgate, with characteristic mediæval jocularity, tells us that he could find only that number of good women to celebrate, and therefore he was obliged to stop for lack of material. Too many of Chaucer's works are left incomplete to render it necessary to seek any special reason why this result should have come about in any particular instance. But in the case of this poem we are able to give it with a reasonable degree of certainty. We get from its prologue the impression that it was undertaken at the command, or at least at the request, of some one high in position, in all probability the queen of Richard II. Whether ordered or not, the work was begun with a good deal of enthusiasm. If we can place any weight upon Chaucer's own words, he designed, when he set

about its production, to make it the crowning achievement of his literary career. Its composition was to extend over no small part of his life. This is, indeed, expressly asserted in the speech which Alcestis is represented as addressing to the poet. It is in these lines she tells him of the manner in which he is to expiate his trespass against the God of Love:

> "Thou shalt, while that thou livest, year by year,
> The mostè party[1] of thy timè spend
> In making of a glorious legénd
> Of goodè women, maidenès and wivès,
> That weren true in loving all here[2] livès." 481–485.

Obviously this passage does not contemplate a speedy completion of the work. It reads almost like a formal announcement by the poet of an undertaking to which he was to devote the labor of years. Were there anything certain about the date of the publication of the first form of the 'Confessio Amantis,' and that its composition preceded the completion of the 'Legend of Good Women,' we could almost fancy that the latter was the 'Testament of Love,' which Chaucer was enjoined to write to set a crown upon all his work.

At the time he began this poem Chaucer clearly looked upon a collection of tales of this kind as supplying him an ample field for the display of his powers. But the 'Legend of Good Women,' the moment we leave its prologue, does not vary essentially in its nature from the Monk's tale. The narratives in the latter are briefer and balder, and perhaps designedly so; but the motive is the same in each. The experience gained in

[1] Part. [2] Their.

the one undertaking left, as was natural, its impress very perceptibly in the character of the comment made upon the other. There is nothing more peculiar in the 'Legend of Good Women' than the steadily growing dissatisfaction of the author with his subject which marks its progress. It was not long before Chaucer began to see the folly of what he had set out to accomplish. His keen artistic sense could not fail to recognize the insufficiency of a plan which permitted him to deal only with the variations of a single theme. He was hampered still further by the limitations imposed by the legendary stories he was versifying. The necessity of adhering to their details prevented him from giving any wide play to his imagination. He knew at the beginning of every one precisely what he had to do, just as his reader would know in the same case that it was a dismal ending which he was to expect. It is therefore not at all strange that the inevitable monotony wore upon him speedily. It made him at last careless and indifferent in the choice of these stories. He was, in consequence, not always justified in his selection even by the wide license which he gave himself. The tale of Philomela is really a tale of man's infidelity and brutal cruelty. It is not in any sense one of woman's devotion or of her martyrdom for love. It made him equally indifferent and careless in the treatment of his story. His increasing lack of interest is openly displayed in the hasty and reckless manner in which his work is done towards the end. In the legend of Ariadne, Theseus is specifically described as being three-and-twenty years of age. But when Ariadne plans the scheme of rescuing

him from death, which will necessitate the flight of all concerned in the plot, she not only stipulates that he shall wed her herself, but that on his arrival at Athens he shall give his son in marriage to her sister Phædra.

As the work went on Chaucer's impatience visibly increased. At times he was prompted to relieve its inevitable monotony by the introduction of a humorous element. In fact, when we reach the fourth of the stories, and find that Jason is threatened with the exposure of his deceit in lines which end with words of this sort,

"Have at thee, Jason, now thy horn is blown!" 1383.

we can be sure that the undertaking has already begun to assume in his eyes the character which he came to look upon as belonging to it. By the time he reached the eighth story—that of Phillis—he makes no pretence of concealing the disgust he has felt, and is continuing to feel, with his subject, and his desire to be done with it as soon as possible. It is in the following words he explains his reasons for not giving the particulars of what passed between the heroine and Demophon:

"But for I am agroted[1] herebeforn,
To write of hem[2] that be in love forsworn,
And eke to hastè me in my legénd—
Which to performè God me gracè send—
Therefore I passè shortly as I can." 2454–2458.

The very conclusion of this tale, with its mock advice to women to beware of men, and in matters of love to trust no one of them but Chaucer himself, is ample proof that the element of seriousness was departing

[1] Surfeited, sated. [2] Them.

rapidly from the work. Nothing of that nature could well be imputed to a professedly tragic poem, which ended up with lines like these:

> "Be ware, ye women, of your subtle foe,
> Since yet this day men may ensample see;
> And trusteth, as in love, no man but me." 2559–2561.

The result might easily be predicted when once the spirit that pervades the eighth legend is fully comprehended. That which followed was not only the concluding one, but it was not itself concluded.

The taste which made collections of stories of this kind popular came to be recognized by Chaucer as essentially vicious in art, and therefore transitory. It shows how thoroughly developed was the critical side of his intellectual nature that he should have reached such a conclusion, while this style of composition was not only in full fashion, but had before it centuries in which to exist and flourish. This same disposition to look upon things as they are, to free his mind from the notions and prejudices of the time, was attended with a certain danger to the legitimate exercise of his poetical power. It became hard for him to make use of illusions which he himself did not accept as realities, or to represent sentiments and incidents that he felt were not true to life. The Franklin's tale, for illustration, is a story of natural magic. To enjoy it, the reader must consent to lay aside for the time being all doubts as to the possibility of the events happening which are narrated in it. But as I have pointed out previously, the poet stops in the very middle of the piece to express the most contemptuous opinion of the very thing, be-

lief in which is essential to the success of his story as a story. This is an instance in which the critical element of his nature came dangerously near destroying the force of the creative. The very opposite method is followed in the tale of the Wife of Bath. There the poetic treatment is allowed its full sway. It is a fairy story that is told. It is told so skilfully that it usually escapes the notice of the reader that it is a fairy story. Chaucer does nothing in it anywhere to impair in the slightest the illusion. On the contrary, he heightens it; he gives, in fact, such an air of verisimilitude that we accept all its impossibilities as occurrences naturally to be expected.

But when we come to a story that deals with the events of real life, the critical tone of Chaucer's mind is always inclined to assert itself somewhere. No glamour of ideal interpretation hides from his own eyes whatever things are unreal in the scenes he depicts, though it may be sufficient to blind the eyes of his readers. He may ignore them for purposes of his own. He usually does ignore them. None the less is he aware of their existence. The Clerk of Oxford's tale is perhaps the best exemplification of the method that Chaucer follows in his handling of a story, the events of which, while susceptible of poetic treatment, are in no way consonant with the truth of life. The heroine of it is the representative of patience. But it is not a kind of patience which recommends itself to ordinary human nature. The modern man, and still more the modern woman, so far from finding her conduct creditable, is much disposed to give it the name of weak-spirited, and even despicable. Griselda fails in a woman's first duty, the defence of her

offspring. She allows them to be sacrificed, as she supposes, without protest, to suit the whim of a ruthless father. The behavior is so unnatural as to excite in some readers a feeling of repulsion towards the patient wife. It makes them unjust towards the real excellences she is represented as manifesting. It is not a feeling that has shown itself much in literature, in which conventional judgments continue to be repeated. But it finds frequent and adequate expression in life. Not so, however, did it affect generally the men of the age in which it appeared. When Petrarch received it from Boccaccio, it wholly engrossed his attention, though at the time he was burdened and distracted with public and private cares. He learned it by heart, to repeat to his friends. He turned it into Latin, so that it should not escape the knowledge of those who were ignorant of Italian. One citizen of Padua, a man of exceeding learning and judgment, to whom he submitted it for examination, was prevented from finishing it by his tears. Ogle, who was the first to paraphrase the Clerk's tale in modern English, was so impressed by this statement that he went much beyond the usual claim that Chaucer had heard the story from Petrarch's own lips. He conjectured that the person who wept so profusely upon the occasion was Chaucer himself.

The central idea of this story is, as has been indicated, too revolting to the feelings of modern life, or, for that matter, to the feelings of any life whatever, for any skill in description to make it palatable. Griselda does not even exhibit the degree of sensibility which exists in the females of the brute creation. Her patience outrages

every instinct of maternity, and the respect which men pay to that quality in woman. There were, however, reasons that led Chaucer to select the story for narration, besides the opportunity it gave him to employ his power of pathetic description. They were, in large measure, the same that had led Boccaccio and Petrarch to select it. In it was represented a phase of sentiment and belief which, however temporary in its nature, was at the time widely prevalent. It was doubtless accepted by many as belonging to the normal order of things. Its details were consonant with the feelings of an age in which there was an ingrained belief in the absolute inferiority of the subject to the lord, of the wife to the husband. Griselda fulfils both conditions. She is the servant of the master who chose her as his bride. Out of mere wantonness he puts her patience and obedience to the extremest tests. She comes out triumphantly from the ordeal. She exemplifies in her unrepining obedience to the most unnatural commands the principles of conduct which she, as well as every one else in her situation, had been brought up to regard as sacred. Entire unquestioning acquiescence in the will of her husband and her lord she conscientiously accepts as the only rule of life. She acts in accordance with her faith. If Abraham is to be honored for his willingness to offer up his only son at the command of his Creator, she, in the view of that age, is to be honored for yielding, without complaint, to a sacrifice of herself and her children which she had not the power to prevent, and against which she had not the disposition to protest.

But this unhesitating submission to a treatment which

outrages all that we are accustomed to hold sacred in the family relation is so repugnant to the feelings of our age that it has sensibly affected the reputation of the story. It was once one of the most widely known in literature. It was dramatized for the stage. It was turned into a puppet-play for the masses. With the gradual vanishing of the sentiment upon which it was founded, the popularity of the central figure has dwindled, and will doubtless continue to dwindle. The utter unreality of the behavior was recognized even by Petrarch. He considered it an example of patience too remarkable to be repeated a second time. Another friend of his, a Veronese, he tells us, refused to be affected by it, because it was too remarkable to have ever happened at all. To neither of them did it apparently occur that it was something which ought never to have happened. The distinction of Chaucer is that he not only recognized the unreality of the behavior commended, but also its impropriety, not to say absurdity. This was full as apparent to him as it would be to any man of modern times. The view is occasionally taken that the incidents of the tale were devised for the sake of defending the female character from the malicious attacks upon it that were current in the mediæval ages. Instead of being the shrewish, self-seeking, and generally pestilent creatures they were then reported to be, they were capable, on the contrary, of displaying the most angelic qualities of mind and heart. It is sufficient to say that the people who would read the story would not be those who needed this sort of instruction. If such a thing did occasionally happen, the gross improbability of the

events narrated would destroy any influences of such a character. Whatever lesson of the sort modern criticism may find conveyed in the poem, the comment which Chaucer added in the course of the narrative upon the conduct of the hero of the piece shows that he fully appreciated the indefensible and monstrous nature of the proceedings of the husband. The comment he added at the end shows also that he looked upon the conduct of the wife as being even more preposterous than it was impossible. His envoy would of itself have destroyed the effect of any such moral as has been imputed to the piece. It would surely never have been appended by any one who had such a moral in view. Chaucer felt towards this tale as does the modern reader who is not transported by the spirit of self-sacrifice. It was a story that could be made effective by being told delicately and earnestly. Therefore he told it delicately and earnestly. It appealed especially to the taste of one class of minds in his age. It was for them he selected it; for in his great work it was his manifest intention to write for all classes, and to represent all phases of feeling and conduct that in his eyes were worthy of representation.

This evident appeal on the poet's part to different natures in the choice of his subjects brings us at once to the consideration of one of the most vexed questions connected with his writings. This is the charge brought against Chaucer for the coarseness of some of his tales. About this matter a wide difference of opinion has existed from an early period — undoubtedly, indeed, from the very beginning. It is a difference of opinion that is

based upon a radically different view of the province of art. The contest is therefore not now ended, nor will it ever be ended. By the advocates of the one side these tales are, in consequence, stoutly defended. Chaucer, they say, is purposing to give a picture of human life in its entirety. He is not to be censured because some of its aspects are disagreeable and degrading. Rather is he to be commended for holding the mirror up to nature. According to this view, there is nothing more objectionable in his course of conduct than there is in the representation of the nude in painting or sculpture. On the other hand, there are those who look upon these tales as utterly inexcusable. They are spoken of as great stains upon the poet's writings, if not upon his personal character. The exceptional ability displayed in them does not furnish the least palliation for the offence of their production. No felicity of execution can justify the description of scenes not fit to be described, nor wipe away the blot which the composition of these pieces has cast upon Chaucer's poetic achievement as a whole.

Between the partisans of these two sides hovers a class of critics whose opinions are heard much oftener in these later days than at any previous period. They defend, or perhaps it would be better to say they apologize for, these tales on the ground that they were in conformity with the taste of the times. Virtue is as old as the race; delicacy is quite a modern invention. The coarseness exhibited in some of Chaucer's stories, therefore, was not anything personal to the author, but a characteristic of his century. The only fault, accordingly, that

can be found with the poet is that he was not superior to his contemporaries. While this is something that may be desired, it is hardly a thing that can fairly be demanded. The merits of Chaucer, consequently, are wholly his own. His failings are the failings of his age. This explanation or extenuation is something that the morality of the nineteenth century feels called upon to offer, in order to reconcile its love for the poet with its admiration for the man.

It is doubtless the fact that the transgressions of Chaucer against modern canons of propriety are within certain limits due to his age and not to himself. This is especially true of several of the links between the tales, and also of some of the incidents in the tales themselves. There is nothing in them offensive to morals. All that can be said against them now is that they are offensive to taste, or in some instances to certain tastes. They probably struck no one in his time as being in the least objectionable. So far as they have any effect in inflaming the passions, they are not in the least so now. If any exception could be taken to them on that ground, it would be only by that class of virtuous men who possess prurient imaginations. For it is too plain to need comment that the morality of a work must be decided by its general tendency, and not by the particular words it uses or the particular facts it relates. Chaucer's age endured an amount of plain-speaking on certain topics which the present would never tolerate. Our own may possibly permit it in ways that are even more injurious in their scope and influence. However that may be, there is no question that incidents which can be de-

scribed without offence during the existence of one grade of culture cannot be repeated generally in another and perhaps higher grade of culture. They are told; but they are not told in public.

This condition of things will cover some of the cases in the poet's writings to which exception has been taken. But it will not cover all. It is perfectly certain, moreover, that Chaucer himself would never have sanctioned the apologies based upon this line of defence which have been offered in his behalf. What he did, he did with his eyes open. He set out to depict the life of the time in all its varied phases, as no one before or since has even attempted the task. The actors he brought upon the stage ran through all grades of society, from the highest to the lowest. It was his evident purpose to make the various personages that form part of his company speak in character; and the principles of art which he held he followed unflinchingly to their legitimate conclusion. He did not ask whether the conduct he designed to portray was good conduct, desirable conduct, pious conduct, but whether it formed the proper material for the picture he was drawing. Certain people were vulgar, their feelings were vulgar, their conversation was vulgar. A conception that the part assigned to each individual should be in full keeping with his nature required that the rude and coarse personages in the company should tell rude and coarse stories—stories in which the men of that class delight, though the delight is far from being confined to the men of that class. If he expected to succeed in portraying the whole life of the times, it was just as necessary for

Here, simply stated, is the creed that Chaucer accept-

ed. That such it was we have the right to infer from the character of his various stories. But in making up our estimate of his opinions we are not limited to what he did. We can appeal directly to what he said. Upon this very point he has taken care not to leave us in the slightest doubt. His words are precise and positive. They make perfectly clear that the conclusions to which he came were not taken up inadvertently, but were the result of full reflection. They show also that two parties with opposing views on this subject of controversy existed then as now. They bring to our knowledge in particular an influential body of men, who felt and expressed themselves just as strongly in this matter as similar men feel and talk in our own time. The poet thoroughly comprehended the position they took. He unquestionably dissented from it. Yet he dissented with hesitation and reluctance. In the general Prologue to his great work he laid down definitely the laws by which his action was to be governed. The fact that he felt it necessary to do this proves that he was aware of the existence of a class of persons who taught doctrines entirely contrary to his own. While he did not accept their opinion of his art, he was sensitive to their opinion of himself. His language shows that he combined much respect for the individuals who held these views with correspondingly little respect for the views they held.

The quasi-apology which Chaucer in the general Prologue makes to a certain class of his critics for the character of some of his stories gives us a clear insight into his ideas about the proper relation of art and morals. If it proves nothing else, it disposes of the theory that in

his production he acted merely from a creative impulse which had about it no element of critical reflection. He must, he says, tell his tale "after his man;" that is, he must tell the kind of tale the particular person introduced was sure to tell, and must tell it in the way it was told. So to do was not 'villainy' on his part; that is, conduct belonging to a villein but unbecoming a gentleman. It was proper regard for the truth of nature, and therefore for the truth of art. If the personage whose story is recounted follow his instincts in speaking "rudeliche and large"—that is, coarsely and broadly—there are but two courses open to the author. He must report the words precisely as they were uttered, or else substitute for them either new words or new matter of his own. But if he adopt the latter line of conduct, he is not faithful to the duty he has assumed. He is not telling the tale truly; that is, as it would have been told by the character to whom it was assigned.

This is a statement sufficiently definite to make us acquainted with the poet's opinions. But the very same point is put even more specifically in the prologue to the Miller's tale, as well as more boldly. The apology here to those who hold the opposite view becomes at the end half-contemptuous. He does not disguise from the reader that the story to be narrated is of a coarse nature. He even pretends to be vexed that he is compelled to report it. But the Miller has told his tale, such as it was. It is therefore a duty incumbent upon him to repeat it just as it was told. He then proceeds to defend himself for this procedure. In the following lines we have precisely the same kind of

deliverance that has appeared earlier in the general Prologue:

> "And therefore every gentle wight, I pray,
> For Goddès lovè deemeth not that I say
> Of evil intent, but that I mot rehearse
> Hire tales allè, be they better or worse,
> Or elles falsen some of my mattér."

But in this instance the poet does not stop with the apology which he was doubtless conscious would fail utterly to satisfy those to whom it was addressed. He goes on to inform the persons who take exception to these stories that they are under no obligation to read them. There is plenty of other matter to be found in the work—matter which deals with noble life, with morality, and with holiness. Turn over the page, he practically tells the reader, and choose instead of these objectionable pieces another one of a kind that suits your own pure and elevated character. This same sort of advice, it may be added, has been given by one of the poet's editors. Urry remarks at the beginning of the Miller's tale that the story is one of ribaldry. "So, reader," he continues, "you know what you are to expect; read or forbear, as you think fitting." To the argument of the Reeve's tale he appended a similar observation. "This you may pass over if you please," he remarked. But there is a contemptuous tone in Chaucer's words which is absent from his editor's. The poet seems to have had in mind the class of men, not unknown to our own day, who are glad to read vicious books, but fancy they have a moral end in view because they read them with the virtuous intention of being shocked.

There is, of course, an undertone of irony in Chaucer's representation of himself as not telling a coarse story out of the slightest evil intent, but solely from a sacred sense of duty. An element of the intentionally comic must enter into the declaration of a man who represents himself as being under a moral obligation to narrate an immoral tale. But the seriousness of the speaker need not be questioned, though his words are jestingly spoken. It is not the compulsion of the moral conscience that forces him to do what he does, but that of the artistic. This is the poet's position. I am not attacking it or defending it. I am simply trying to state it. But such a view of his method of procedure disposes at once of the theory that it was taken in unthinking compliance with the low tastes of an age in which all tastes were low. Any such interpretation of his motives or conduct must accordingly be cast aside. The words which have been quoted prove clearly that men existed at that time who looked upon what he was about to do with disfavor, while he himself regarded it not as a legitimate, but as the legitimate, course to take. He therefore placed himself deliberately upon the side of those who insist that art, while it is not immoral, is non-moral. Upon the questions involved in this dispute there has always been a difference of opinion so radical that it is safe to say that it will last forever. According to the view held by each party, therefore, Chaucer will always stand justified or condemned. The dramatist Beaumont, in his letter to Speght, boldly defended the poet's practice as the only proper one he could adopt without swerving from decorum, by which he means without swerving from the

true principles of art. "No man," he concludes, "can imagine in that large compass of his, purposing to describe all men living in those days, how it had been possible for him to have left untouched these filthy delights of the baser sort of people." The poet Clough in our own day, while in a measure deprecating these stories, is forced to commend their artistic excellence. He plainly implies that they are poems which everybody likes to read but no one cares to quote. "They are thoroughly English stories," he writes, "but I don't know whether they are New English. They are just what would be relished to this day in public-houses in farming districts; but I can't say that I could wish them urged upon any palate that does not already fancy them, and I don't much admire the element in the English character that does relish them."

I have endeavored to make it clear that it was the artistic conscience by which Chaucer was influenced in his literary work, and not the moral one. He has told us himself what it permitted him to do in the revelation of low life. But we can also discover what it would not permit him to do. Here again we have from his own lips the statement of his poetic creed. It was not to the coarse and vulgar that he objected. That which was to be rigorously avoided was the disgusting, the horrible, the revolting—anything, in fact, which aroused unpleasant sensations, not in particular minds, but in all minds. There may not be anything too rude or even too painful for art; but there are some things too loathsome. This doctrine Chaucer sets forth plainly in two or three places. The Wife of Bath, who is not herself

described as specially scrupulous, speaks of such an evil story as that of the Cretan queen Pasiphae as being suited only to the taste of an evil-minded man.

"Fie! speak no more, it is a grisly thing,"[1]

is the vigorous way in which she is represented as rejecting its disagreeable details. But it is in the prologue to the Man of Law's tale that the poet expresses his views with absolute distinctness and unreserve. He there reveals to us that in his opinion there was a certain class of stories that were not to be narrated. He illustrates the nature of these by two specific examples. One of them is the incestuous love of Canace for her brother, which had been told by his favorite author, Ovid. The other is the revolting incident of the treatment of his daughter by King Antiochus, which occurs in the story of Apollonius of Tyre. Both of these tales had been included by Gower in his 'Confessio Amantis.' It is accordingly taken for granted by many students that Chaucer here deliberately criticised his contemporary. This may be the case. Still, it is noteworthy that the circumstance in the latter story which he specified as particularly horrible is not found in the version as it appears in Gower. But his detestation of tales of this kind he does not hide. "Of such cursed stories I say fie!" he writes. Not content with this declaration of dislike, he goes on to make the following utterance:

"And therefore he, of full avisèment,
Would never write in none of his sermóns
Of such unkind[2] abominatións."[3]

[1] Prologue to *Wife of Bath's tale*, line 735.

[2] Unnatural.

[3] Prologue to *Man of Law's tale*, lines 86–89.

These words have a direct bearing upon the subject of this chapter. We in modern times are often graciously inclined to concede to the early author greater creative power. But we are equally inclined to deny him critical ability, and sometimes even the perception that such a thing exists. Superiority in the latter we arrogate to ourselves as a compensation for our admission of inferiority in the former. It is a question whether either view is justified by the facts. Chaucer tells us, it will be observed, that he condemned and rejected the stories he mentioned, "of full avisement;" that is, after full deliberation. If he rejected some after deliberation, it is a natural inference that in accepting those he did he went through the same critical process. At any rate, he draws a clearly marked line between the kinds of stories fit or unfit to be told. That which disgusts or revolts the minds of all is outside the province of true art, and must therefore not be handled. He acted throughout in accordance with his convictions. He never lingers long on any incidents peculiarly painful. We see this exemplified in his description of scenes of strife and carnage. The incidents are never of a revolting character. He felt with Theseus in the Knight's tale that he did not desire the unnecessary effusion of blood; that indiscriminate slaughter in a story, like indiscriminate killing in real life, is not a feature which a properly constituted mind can contemplate with satisfaction.

Distinctions of the kind made by Chaucer in the character of the stories to be told would never be accepted by that criticism which sets above everything

else moral quality, and in comparison with it pays little heed to literary or artistic quality. Perhaps they may be justly deemed insufficient in themselves. The extremest advocate of art for art's sake, even if he ignores morality, need not feel called upon to insult it. In order to attain simplicity, it is not necessary to adopt nudity. If a deference to the highest art forbids a man from portraying scenes that are revolting to the æsthetic nature, why should it not equally forbid his describing incidents that are offensive to the moral nature? This is not a demand that works of imagination shall be limited exclusively to the portraiture of certain phases of human conduct. It is that its representations of life should not make unduly prominent the life that is not worth living. Drunkenness prevails, lust bestializes, cruelty rages. No observer of society can fail to see the baleful manifestations of all these. They are forces upon whose appearance and activity we have constantly to reckon. Still, there are equally true and far sweeter and nobler things to be recorded of human nature than these. It can hardly be called a healthy intellectual instinct that delights to batten upon garbage merely to make emphatic, what every one knows already, that garbage exists.

Into the general question of the correctness or incorrectness of the poet's position it is not important to enter here. It is enough to point out the side which he was on. One or two things, however, it is necessary to add, as they may to some extent modify our judgment of his course. There is no sham in Chaucer. He makes no pretence, as do the modern dealers in obscen-

ity, to be aiming at the moral regeneration of the race. The treatment by him of his matter, moreover, is something altogether distinct from that which has in later times generally characterized works of the sort under discussion. There is about the most objectionable of his stories nothing of that steamy licentious atmosphere which unconsciously enervates the moral sense, even if it does not directly stimulate the passions. This is due in a measure to his outspokenness. Chaucer insinuates nothing, suggests nothing; what he means he says with almost startling distinctness. Far more, however, is it due to the fact that the interest of the story as a story does not depend upon the sin that enters into it. That may be essential to its development. It is not, however, the point to which the attention is supremely directed. Ordinarily it is in truth little more than an incident. In the Reeve's tale it is the rascality of the miller to which the thoughts of the reader are turned. In the Merchant's tale the union in marriage of youth and age is the central idea about which the whole interest of the action revolves. Moreover, while Chaucer recognized as plainly as any one the objections that would be urged against these stories, it is fair to add that he could not have anticipated the character of some of the strictures to which they have been subjected. It is no easy matter for an author even in his own time to attain to the moral level of his critics. To attain to that of the critics of later times with their changing canons of propriety is quite hopeless. In much of the comment that has been made upon these productions there has unquestionably been mingled a good deal of cant. The

censure has not been due to any genuine feeling in the matter, but has found utterance in deference to that tone of conventional propriety and decorum which the purified spirit of modern times demands in a certain class of works and is absolutely indifferent to in others. We who are never tedious, never commonplace, never vulgar, can afford to characterize with some severity the places where Chaucer falls below our own lofty standard of speech and morals. But a generation which can stand without shock the modern newspaper is hardly entitled to assume any superior airs of virtue, to say nothing of delicacy, over the one that delighted in the broadest of his tales.

Still, while it would be grossly unjust to stigmatize Chaucer as an immoral writer on account of these stories, it is difficult to go as far as some and assume that they are absolutely inoffensive, and that we can venture to look upon him in consequence as a bulwark of morality. It is the misfortune of all work of this kind that it will attract to itself a certain class of minds who are incapable of relishing the genius it exhibits, but have a morbid scent for the filth it contains. The lesson these tales convey is in most instances a very salutary one; but it is useless to pretend that for many they are direct provocatives to virtue. They do not make for righteousness. Yet the student of literary history will at first be puzzled to explain the importance that has been attributed to them in connection with the poet. Why has attention in the past been so largely called to these stories, to the exclusion of his other work? Why has their production fastened a re-

proach upon the author in the eyes of many which has never been visited upon full as great offenders as he, if not much greater? The tales to which exception can be taken form but a small proportion of Chaucer's writings. Had his great work been completed on the scale he contemplated, the proportion would doubtless have been far smaller. Why, then, should he be singled out for special reprobation? Why should these pieces receive constant mention in connection with his poetic achievement? One reason for this condition of things lies on the surface. It is his outspokenness, of which mention has already been made. The bluntness of his expression comes upon many minds with a sense of shock. There is no resort to those euphemistic devices which may not make us insensible to the sin related, but do keep out of sight sin's essential grossness. So far as this freedom of utterance is offensive to modern taste and not to morality, it is of course not to be censured. If outspokenness is to be deemed corrupting, we must prepare to abandon our Bibles. It is well known, indeed, that there are sensitive souls who are so disgusted with the plain-speaking of that work that, according to their own assertion, they refuse to read it on that account.

There is still another reason for the excessive prominence given to this side of Chaucer's creation. The wide familiarity with it has been in a measure due to accident. It is the result of the difficulty with which the poet's writings were read in consequence of the change in the character of the language. The decline which took place in his literary reputation on this account was fol-

lowed by a decline in his moral reputation. As interest in his writings became less, those of the more elevated type were the first to suffer from neglect. The pieces written in the comic vein, as appealing to a larger class, retained their popularity longer. Attention came finally to be directed to them as the supremely characteristic work of their author. This will account largely for the epithet "merry" so constantly applied to Chaucer for the hundred years following the Restoration. It had, indeed, been employed earlier. In the play entitled 'The Return from Parnassus,' which was brought out in 1606, that very adjective is found in connection with his name. But it was not till the end of the same century that it came into frequent use. From that time it is found constantly. Much the more numerous proportion of the references to Chaucer that occur between 1660 and 1775 are made to his humorous tales. In fact, as has been mentioned elsewhere, the impression came to prevail with most that these were about the only kind of tales he did write. Men, in truth, will be sure to find what they go to seek. Consequently, while Chaucer in the sixteenth century was reckoned by the fierce moralists of that time among religious reformers and theological writers, he came to be considered by the dissolute minds of the eighteenth century as principally distinguished for the production of loose stories.

This feeling came to be widespread. One result of it was the complete misapprehension of the meaning of the prologue of the Wife of Bath's tale, both by those who approved and those who disapproved of it. Pope misunderstood it, but modernized it; and his course in

so doing gave offence to some. When in 1714 Steele published his 'Poetical Miscellany,' he had as one of his contributors Mr. John Hughes. This gentleman was one of those respectable but exceedingly dreary authors whose works literary antiquaries feel bound to read, because their contemporaries would not. He had at first furnished a number of contributions to this 'Miscellany.' But he withdrew most of them as soon as he found that Pope's version of the prologue of the Wife of Bath's tale was to make its appearance in the volume, as well as some other pieces that were inconsistent with his ideas of decency and decorum. This, at least, is the reason given by his biographer.[1] The action of Hughes in the matter was not, however, thoroughly consistent. Though he withdrew most, he did not withdraw all. The fact that, in spite of his scruples of conscience, he allowed two smaller pieces to appear anonymously, suggests to the censorious mind that the failure of the rest of his pieces to be included may have been due not so much to his own wish as to the wish of the editor; that the determining motive in their non-publication was not the inconsistency of the other pieces with his ideas, but the inconsistency of his pieces with the ideas of others. Be that as it may, his defection did not alarm Steele. Pope's version of the prologue to the Wife of Bath's tale occupies the post of honor in the 'Miscellany,' though there is little in the volume to make contribution to it an honor.

The feeling which regarded the poet as especially a

[1] *Letters by Several Eminent Persons Deceased, including the Correspondence of John Hughes, Esq.*, *etc.*, by John Duncombe (London, 1773), 2d ed., vol. i., p. xvii.

comic author continued down to our century. It has affected the judgments of men even when they no longer read the tales upon which the feeling was based. It has led as late as the present generation to the surprising criticism—if anything in criticism can be deemed surprising—that Chaucer cannot take his place among the world's greatest authors because he is not a serious writer. It shows how beliefs survive after the facts or fictions upon which they were founded have perished that this view was expressed by so acute and accomplished a critic as the late Matthew Arnold. He informed us that Chaucer could hardly be classed with Homer, with Dante, with Shakspeare, not because he lacked genius equal to theirs—which is a perfectly defensible position—but because he lacked seriousness. He found this quality, though in fitful flashes, in the voice of a man like Villon, who lived a life of riot and crime in the slums of Paris. He proceeded to illustrate his meaning by quoting a stanza from a ballade of that poet. This, he asserted, contained more of the important poetic virtue of seriousness than all of the productions of Chaucer put together.[1] The selection was a somewhat unfortunate one. It so happens that the identical thought in Villon's verse which Arnold selected for comment and commendation had been previously expressed by the English poet with peculiar power. Indeed, if there is anything supremely characteristic of Chaucer—and plenty of illustrations of the fact have been furnished in this work—it is his consciousness of the burden of sorrow that rests upon human life. The

[1] Introduction to Ward's *English Poets*, vol. i., pp. xxxiv., xxxv.

joyousness of his nature is unquestionably fully reflected in his productions; but it is never the joyousness that springs from indifference or recklessness. Nor is it inconsistent with an undertone of melancholy. On the contrary, the refrain that recurs regularly in his writings is the transitoriness of happiness; that over the future of all of us the black shadow of calamity is ever impending. It was not, in truth, lack of seriousness on the part of the poet that led to the surprising remark that has just been quoted; it was lack of knowledge on the part of his critic.

The outspokenness of Chaucer's expression and the historic valuation of his writings will account to some extent for the special attention given to the tales under discussion. But they will not account for it entirely nor even principally. The real reason is something of an essentially different nature. It is one, too, which will always continue to operate. The difficulty with what moralists would call Chaucer's bad work is that it is so good. There is a lightness, an airiness, a grace of expression, a keenness of observation and comment, a sustained interest of narration in these stories which raise them to the very highest rank in the creations of their class. The characters in these humorous tales, while they are usually of low position, are nevertheless the most delightful sinners in the range of poetic fiction. The incidents themselves may be of the kind, as Clough said, which are still relished in public-houses in farming districts; but the accessories with which they are invested by the poet take them out of the realm of vulgar narrative, and appeal to the literary sense with a charm that

few productions on more elevated themes inspire. Herein Chaucer stands at the opposite pole from Shakspeare. The work of the latter abounds in coarse allusions, in filthy conceits, in double meanings. But these passages in the great dramatist's writings are supremely uninteresting. They are as tedious as they are vile. They cannot be called innocent, but they are innocuous, owing to the saving grace of stupidity. When Shakspeare appeals to the lower nature, he does it largely through the agency of verbal quibbles, which are, if possible, more execrable intellectually than they are morally. To trace the allusions contained in them, to unravel the obscurities inwrapped in them, involve a degree of labor which few are willing to bestow, or a previous acquaintance with human nastiness that few have qualified themselves to possess. The result is that these things are constantly passed over unnoticed. There is little attraction in the pursuit of knowledge peculiarly difficult to acquire, and with which, when obtained, the acquirer is more disgusted than pleased. But there is nothing like this in Chaucer. His work of the kind is perfect in its kind. The tale is attractive, not because it is coarse, but because it is charmingly told. Even the stoutest defender of the poet's procedure as being true to life and true to art can hardly fail to entertain at times the wish that he had been a little less faithful to his principles, and that his bad stories were not quite so bad.

Because Chaucer has been defended from many of the charges brought against him, it is not to be inferred that fault can be found with him only by those who are

sensitive, duly or unduly, on the score of morals. On the purely intellectual side grave defects manifestly exist. While I have striven to show that he was a great literary artist, and that his greatness as an artist was not only a growth, but a conscious growth, I am not seeking to maintain the view that even in his best estate he was flawless. There are not only times when he falls below his ideal, but when his ideal itself comes short of what we should expect him to reach. The most flagrant of his failures in this respect was due to his possession of those supposed vast acquirements for which he has received praise so unstinted. Whether these were great or little, they sometimes stood in the way of the artistic perfection of his work. In the case of a writer of original genius, learning is a good servant but a bad master. It has made men timid where they should have been bold. It has hampered creative activity by imposing upon it the check of so-called authority. It has made the truth of life subordinate to the truth of facts and dates. In one way it did not interfere with Chaucer as it has done constantly with later writers. With these latter attention to accuracy of detail has often weakened and sometimes destroyed the general effect at which they aim. It has sometimes made the accessories so important that the principal matter has come to be forgotten. This was not a danger to which Chaucer was exposed. It was not exactness he troubled himself about. His fault was of an entirely different cast. It was the dragging-in of learning at irrelevant times and places, not because it had even a remote connection with the subject, but because it seemed to him curious and interesting. There

was, in fact, a perpetual conflict going on between his instincts as an artist and his natural desire in an age of ignorance to display his acquirements. There are doubtless other considerations to be taken into account in the explanation of the course he followed. He had begun his career as a translator, and the feelings of the translator clung to him. His enjoyment of what he found beautiful in a foreign tongue was so intense that it was inevitable he should seek to reproduce for others what had delighted himself. This, even if it be deemed a palliation, can hardly be regarded as a justification. Consciousness of the excellence of others is a good thing; but not if it impairs one's own excellence. Nor is it any more a justification that the practice in which he indulged was common among early authors. He was a supreme literary artist. As such he was bound to ascend above the atmosphere of the contemporary and conventional in which inferior men live and breathe. He was a writer for all time, and not for the time. He was therefore bound to free himself from the limitations of the time.

Of this intrusion of irrelevant learning there are many examples. They can be found, too, in his latest work, though neither so frequently nor so conspicuously as in his earlier. For some of them a certain sort of excuse can be made. The long disquisition in which the Pardoner indulges on the evil effects of drunkenness and gaming, with its abundance of historical illustrations, breaks the thread of the tale he relates, and adds nothing to its effect. Yet while from the story-teller's point of view it must be condemned, it may be defended upon

the ground of dramatic propriety. It was entirely in keeping with the character of the narrator and the methods he was wont to use in his preaching. Though his discourse was mainly upon the sin of avarice, it was part of his business to improve any occasion which gave him the opportunity to rebuke particular sins by pertinent examples. This apology, whether sufficient or not, furnishes at any rate the only ground upon which the introduction of the passage can be justified. An argument of a somewhat similar nature can be pleaded, but by no means satisfactorily, for another series of historical references in the Franklin's tale. In it the heroine recounts a number of stories of women who have sacrificed their lives rather than their virtue. The incidents are indeed germane to the subject; but the barest reference is all that would be needed here, and not a formal recital of the facts. The only excuse that can be made for the poet in both these cases is that the English race, as a race, likes to be preached to and to be preached at. The details which strike us as an excrescence may have seemed to his contemporaries an ornament. It is perhaps an illustration of the essentially mutable nature of taste, and the criticism that is based upon it, that the very things with which we should find fault are possibly among the things which recommended him to the favor of his time.

But even a defence of this sort will not avail in the instances that come now to be considered. There are certain works and certain subjects which profoundly interested Chaucer. It is hard for him to tear himself away from them, even when he is conscious that what

he says is foreign to the matter in hand. The first book of the 'House of Fame' furnishes a remarkable example of this practice. It is little more than an epitome of the story of Æneas as told by Virgil. It has no real connection with the main subject which the poet has taken for his theme. That permitted a reference to the tale of Troy, but not an account of it, nor of any episode in it, nor of one growing out of it. Chaucer is himself secretly conscious of the fact. He has stationed himself in this book in the house of Venus, where he has no business to be, or in which certainly there was no occasion for him to linger. But the beauty of the poem which is before his mind has impressed him so forcibly that he is loath to leave it. The story it recounts occupies his attention rather than the attempt to reach the house of Fame. So great is his admiration for it that he is almost inclined to add to the details of Virgil the translation of the epistle of Dido to Æneas as given by Ovid. He does not do it, indeed. Yet it is nothing but the sense of what was due to his art that keeps him from yielding to the temptation. From the recital of the particulars attending the death of the Carthaginian queen he drags himself as if by force, and ends at last all reference to her with words which sound to our ears somewhat profanely as well as very regretfully:

> "And nere it were[1] too long to endite,
> By God, I would it herè write. 382.

There is the same feeling displayed in regard to the same author and in connection with the same story in

[1] Were it not that it were.

the 'Legend of Good Women.' Nothing but the limitation of time prevents his making a complete translation.

"I couldè follow word for word Virgíle,
But it would lasten all too long a while," 1003.

is the mournful comment of the poet as he unwillingly passes away from the particular incident of which he has been speaking.

The appearance of this epitome of the Æneid in the 'House of Fame' has been explained upon other and widely different grounds, some of which are of a highly philosophical nature. It is in truth an exemplification on a larger scale of what Chaucer did frequently upon a smaller. The fact that he was dealing with an ignorant generation led him to put details and definitions in the mouths of his characters which strike the modern reader with a curious sense of impertinence, and would in real life have struck the persons to whom the remarks were addressed as contributions to knowledge rather than to conversation. He sometimes forgot the poet in the lexicographer. There is an almost grotesque instance of this in one of the most fervent love scenes he describes. Cressida, in her final parting interview with Troilus, vows her fidelity by the celestial gods and goddesses, by the nymphs, and by the deities of the infernal world. Not content with these, she swears her faith also

"On satury and fauny more or less." iv., 1554.

The moment she has added these she is apparently tormented by the apprehension that her lover may not

know who the divinities are whom she has just mentioned. She thereupon proceeds to insert the explanatory statement that they are "half-gods of wilderness." It is not to be imagined that Troilus stood in need of this definition. It is the reader of the poem of whom Chaucer was thinking. Even if the hero of the piece could be supposed ignorant of his religion, the moment of relieving sorrow and pledging troth is, to say the least, inappropriate for interjecting general information.

Cressida herself meets with the same treatment at the hands of her new admirer. Diomede, in the course of the love-suit he is making to her, uses the word 'ambages.'[1] Before going on with his addresses he considerately proceeds to define it, and for that purpose employs two lines—a somewhat unnecessary measure, it might seem, to adopt in the case of a heroine who had previously been represented capable of remarking that the gods speak in 'amphibologies.'[2] In the Franklin's tale occurs still another instance which, though not so pronounced in character, is of the same general nature. It is possibly of even more special interest, because it illustrates a practice which has never died out. It is found in the prayer which Aurelius is represented as making to Apollo. In the course of it he begs the divinity to intercede with his sister, Lucina, the moon-goddess, as being the supreme ruler of the waters. But this was a statement of her power and position that differed from the general belief. The petitioner, therefore, parenthetically inserted these explanatory lines

[1] *Troilus and Cressida*, v., 897. [2] Ib., iv., 1406.

"Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,
Yet emperess aboven him is she." 320.

It is obvious that words like these are not strictly part of any prayer. They were not needed for the enlightenment of the sun-god, nor were they designed to affect his action. They do not belong to the character who is communing with the immortals. They are the remarks of Chaucer to the mortal readers of the tale.

The desire to communicate information was, moreover, apt to lead the poet into digressions which were entirely unsuitable to the matter in hand. In the 'Book of the Duchess' the mourning husband gives an account of the perfections of his dead consort. So supreme was she to all others that he would have made choice of her, had he himself been possessed of the beauty of Alcibiades, of the strength of Hercules, of the worthiness of Alexander, of the riches of various countries, of the hardiness of Hector. The mention of this last-named personage brings to mind the fact that he was slain by Achilles. The disconsolate man accordingly turns aside for a few lines to inform the one to whom he is bewailing his misfortunes that the Greek hero was slain in his turn for love of Polyxena, and perished in a temple along with Antilochus, according to the testimony of Dares Phrygius.[1] A little farther on in the same passage the grief-stricken mourner is represented as speaking of the songs he made in honor of his mistress. He was, he tells us, unable, indeed, to rival in this respect Tubal—probably a scribal error for Jubal—the son of Lamech, who was the first to find out the art of song. This leads

[1] Lines 1056–1072.

him to go off into a disquisition upon the way Tubal happened to make this particular discovery. Nor does he stop at that point. He is troubled by the feeling that this is a matter in which absolute certainty cannot be attained. His reputation for accuracy, therefore, is at stake. Not wishing to mislead his hearer, he proceeds to add that the Greeks insist that it was to Pythagoras the art was due.[1] These are particularly gross deviations from propriety caused by the anxiety to display knowledge. But in the very same poem there are several others, though on a much less noticeable scale. They often extend to no more than a line. Brief as they are, they are numerous enough to convey the impression that at the period of his life in which this work was written Chaucer had not yet arrived at a clear comprehension of the distinction that exists between the functions of the creator of literature and of its commentator.

It is, however, the poet's passion for dialectics that led him into the most serious violations of his art. This itself was strengthened by his love for Boethius. From the principal work of that author many of the ideas scattered through his poems are taken. They are sometimes both pertinent and forcible. But Chaucer could not refrain from introducing extracts from him at unseasonable places and on unseasonable occasions. Almost the only thing that impairs in the least the perfect unity and proportion of the Knight's tale is a speech of over one hundred lines put in the mouth of Theseus at its close. Had it been a third as long, it

[1] Lines 1160–1169.

would have been three times as effective. Much of it has little direct relation to the matter in hand. It is largely an elaborate statement of the not very recondite truth that according to the design of the Creator everything must come to an end, and therefore everybody must sooner or later die. The reason that influenced the poet to extend this discourse to the length he did was not its necessity to the development of the idea of the transitoriness of things earthly. It was simply because it gave him an opportunity to introduce a translation of several passages from the favorite work of a favorite author.

There is even worse use made of an extract from Boethius to the effect that true happiness cannot exist here because of the instability of fortune. When Cressida is told by Pandarus that Troilus has been led to suspect her constancy, her grief on account of the trumped-up charge takes the shape of a discussion which she carries on with herself upon the mutability of human joy. She lays down the proposition that man either knows that joy is transitory or he knows it not. If he knows it not, how can he say that he has perfect happiness when he is in the darkness of ignorance? If he does know that it is liable to pass away, he must always be in dread of losing it. If, again, he is indifferent about its disappearance, that of itself is proof that his joy is very slight. In consequence the felicity of which we boast in this our life is vain.[1] The reasoning may or may not be sound; but there is no question that it is

[1] Book iii., lines 812–836. The original is found in the fourth Prose of the second book of the translation of Boethius.

dreadfully out of place. A woman who finds her faith suspected without cause is not apt to relieve her sorrow by entering into a nicely constructed metaphysical argument to prove that there can be no such thing as happiness in this world.

With the grossest instance of the failure on the part of Chaucer to comply with the requirements of his art, I pass from this branch of the subject. His special fondness for the questions connected with the doctrine of free-will and predestination has been mentioned in a previous chapter. It is not always a misfortune. In the Knight's tale it is made conducive to the general effect. In the tale of the Nun's Priest it relieves the situation by its contrast between the greatness of the questions involved and the pettiness of the incidents upon which it is brought to bear. But in 'Troilus and Cressida' it is an intrusion of the worst kind. The hero is in the extremity of grief at the enforced departure of his mistress from Troy. He is so fallen into despair that he cares not whether he lives or dies. But his method of deploring the coming calamity is unexampled on the part of a lover. He enters into a discussion with himself upon the doctrine of predestination. Fully one hundred and twenty lines he takes up with establishing the proposition that everything that happens, happens by necessity.[1] The passage is a versification of the argument on the subject of God's foreknowledge and man's free-will that is contained in the fifth book of the treatise of Boethius. It utterly interferes with the movement of the story. It is tacked to it by the flim-

[1] Book iv., lines 958–1078.

siest of fastenings. It is lacking in some manuscripts, though unfortunately not the best ones. Still, its absence from these makes it reasonable to suppose that its addition was an after-thought which in this case was not of the wisest.

The bad taste exhibited by the poet in such passages will be conceded by all. His most fervent admirers would be readiest to admit the justice of the censure. But there are other methods practised by Chaucer about which difference of opinion has existed in the past and is likely to exist in the future. In referring to his anxiety to display his knowledge I have observed that exactness of detail was a matter about which he gave himself no concern. This leads at once to a point in the criticism of his art which is connected remotely with his learning, or with his lack of it. It is his failure to make his descriptions correspond to the truth of fact, the absolute indifference he displays to what modern criticism would term keeping or local color. The result is, he indulges constantly in anachronisms and in confusions of time and place. Of his course in this respect there has been a good deal of censure. It has been one of the most frequent reasons given for the charge that his writings represent the crude methods of a half-civilized, not to say barbarous, age; and that he conformed to them without even the conception that any better methods were in existence. This was a matter that weighed heavily upon the spirits of his admirers during the last century. Warton, for illustration, thought it a great deal to the credit of the poem and somewhat to the credit of the reader that the latter was not disgusted

with the mixture of manners and the confusion of times that are to be found in the Knight's tale. But the stress laid upon this point has not been limited to former periods. It is heard in our own day. With the constantly increasing familiarity with the inner life of the past it is liable to meet with still more attention in the future. Singularly enough, many of the qualifications that have modified the praise bestowed upon the supposed immensity of the poet's learning owe their origin to the horror entertained of this violation of propriety, as it is called. A general impression exists in regard to Chaucer and other early authors that the variations from fact found in their writings were mistakes of ignorance on their part, or at any rate of carelessness. They would not have been committed had the writer been in possession of the requisite knowledge. Certainly they would not have been committed had the knowledge been before his mind at the time of writing. But no matter how these variations from truth came into being, their appearance evinces great lack of art. This at least is the position taken by many critics.

Anachronisms in Chaucer's writings are certainly numerous. They are far from being confined to particular incidents. The whole action of the piece is often pervaded by their spirit. In the Knight's tale, to which reference has just been made, this is very conspicuous. It is in the time of the Greek heroic age that the events recorded in it take place; but the atmosphere which envelops it is the atmosphere of mediæval chivalry. Not only is the feudal system, with its ideas and feelings, transferred to the mythologic age of Greece, but even

its petty peculiarities of manners and of daily life. Theseus holds at Athens a great tournament. It is not only a fourteenth-century tournament in its general characteristics, but also in its smallest details, down even to the costume and armor of those who take part in it. One of the combatants is even furnished with a Prussian shield. Later in the story one of the weapons borne at the funeral of Arcite is his Turkish bow. Still, there is nothing peculiar about the Knight's tale in this respect. A corresponding state of things can be found in 'Troilus and Cressida.' While the action of both these poems goes on in the legendary period of Greek history, all their proceedings are carried on in strict conformity with those which Chaucer saw taking place in his own time and country. Theseus has at Athens a parliament like that of England, and announces his decisions as having been reached by its advice. In a similar way Priam assembles a parliament at Troy to deliberate upon the proposal to exchange Cressida for Antenor. It is a noisy English representative assembly that is described, and not the council of an absolute monarch. Lords and burgesses are mentioned as speaking and voting upon the question. Hector's wise advice is reported as overborne by the clamor of the rest of the assembly. No trace of this last incident is to be found in Boccaccio. A scene in which the heir apparent to the throne is compelled to yield his own preferences to the outcries of a turbulent and motley crowd of his followers would perhaps have been as foreign to the ideas of the Italian writer as they would have been to the men of the time in which the events are supposed

to have taken place. Throughout, indeed, the proceedings are recounted with absolute fidelity to the contemporary life which the poet saw and in which he shared.

It would be no easy matter to exhaust the list of examples of this sort. In the second book of 'Troilus and Cressida' the heroine is represented as sitting with two other ladies "within a paved parlor," and listening to a maiden who read them the story of the siege of Thebes. There is nothing objectionable in the nature of the tale that is told. In the case of events that have never happened at all, no reason can well be given why one should be considered as having taken place before the other; and, moreover, in the realm of fable the war of Thebes preceded that of Troy. But the conversation that follows shows definitely that the poem of Statius was the one which is represented as having been read. Though its title is not specified, nor the name of its author mentioned, yet the twelve books into which the 'Thebaid' is divided are spoken of expressly. This is an instance somewhat parallel to that occurring in the play of 'Troilus and Cressida,' in which Shakspeare records a speech of Ulysses in which he quotes Aristotle. Gower will furnish even more striking illustrations. In one place he speaks of this same legendary Greek hero as acquainted with the rhetoric of Tully, the astronomy of Ptolemy, the philosophy of Plato, the dreams of Daniel, the proverbs of Solomon, and the herbs of Macer.[2]

There are confusions of beliefs and times full as striking as those already given. Some of them are occasionally so daring as almost to reach the neighborhood of

[1] Book iv., 141–217.

[2] Vol. iii., p. 48 (Pauli).

the grotesque. One of these, impossible in every way but the chronological one, is particularly venturesome. In the tale of the Doctor of Physic, Virginius tells his daughter that, to save her from Appius Claudius, he must put her to death. The Roman maiden begs for a little while to bewail her fate. As a reason for this request she cites an example from the Old Testament Scriptures. Jephthah, she tells her father, before slaying his daughter, gave her a space of time to mourn her untimely end. It is, indeed, in matters of religion that Chaucer exhibits the most glaring instances of his disregard of what was characteristic of the times and places to which the scene of his story belongs. In the 'Legend of Good Women' we are told that Lucretia, after her self-murder, was looked upon by the Romans as a saint, and her day was thenceforth hallowed.[1] In the Franklin's tale the lover prays to Apollo, though the action of the piece takes place in the France of the Middle Ages. In 'Troilus and Cressida' Calchas, the priest of the same god, is styled a bishop, as likewise is the seer Amphiaraus.[2] Pandarus quotes a Scripture text, and informs the hero that he shall be saved by his faith.[3] The heroine, living in the period of the Trojan war, thinks that, instead of spending her time in idle amusements, it would be more becoming for her to take up her abode in a cave, and read the lives of the saints.[4]

It is, however, needless to multiply these illustrations. No increase in the number could add anything to the force of the significance conveyed by those which have been cited. To the question whether the existence of

[1] Line 1871. [2] ii., 103. [3] ii., 1503. [4] ii., 118.

these anachronisms was due to ignorance or to indifference, they seem to me to present an answer that is absolutely conclusive. The former may or may not have existed in any given case; but in no case did its presence or absence affect the poet's action. Chaucer disregarded conformity to fact, because an attempt at its representation did not enter into his theory of his art. The passages in which he unquestionably varies from reality, or supposed reality, by design are often essentially distinct from those in which he varies from it through lack of knowledge. In the Merchant's tale Pluto and Proserpine appear as king and queen of fairy-land. This is a good deal of a change from their position in the ancient mythology as the sceptre-bearers of the infernal world. But it is a change intentionally and intelligently made. It is easily recognizable from the ignorance or carelessness displayed in a passage in 'Troilus and Cressida,' where a heathen character, speaking in accordance with heathen beliefs, describes the Manes as gods of pain.[1] The truth is, if we seek for conformity to fact in Chaucer's writings, we are looking for something which he had no mind to give. The same rule holds good in regard to what is called propriety, at any rate as it is commonly understood. When, to make use of the illustration just furnished, we find Pluto and Proserpine not only appearing as the fairy king and queen, but devoting themselves to the exegesis of Scripture, referring to the doctrine of the Trinity, and discussing the moral character of Solomon, we feel that we are in a region where the limitations of time and space have been swept

[1] v., 892.

away, and a new world has been opened to us in which accredited belief has only so much sway as it suits the pleasure of the poet to concede.

There are those, however, who do not take this view, either of the art of poetry or of Chaucer's art. Any display of indifference to the truth of fact is not a method of procedure which meets their approval. Art with them fails in reaching even remotely its ideal when it conflicts with what they call propriety; and propriety consists largely in adhering to the manners and customs of the times in which the events described take place. If, therefore, such men are admirers of the poet, they feel called upon to apologize for his course in this respect. The plea of ignorance is the one usually set up. In many instances it can be deemed sufficiently satisfactory. It is obvious that the failure to conform to this particular canon of propriety, if it be judged a binding one, is not usually the fault of the early poet, but his misfortune. Confusion of times and places is with him a necessity of the situation. His choice lies between saying what he does, or saying nothing at all. Whatever opinion, therefore, we may entertain of the abstract right or wrong of this course of conduct, we must concede that it was the only course open to Chaucer. There were no means accessible to him or to any other ancient writer to study up the details of the dead past in which the events happened which he records. He had no way of learning how men lived and dressed and fought in remote periods. If, therefore, he portrayed manners at all, he must portray those with which he was familiar. He accordingly imputed to the people of other times

not only the sentiments of his own, but also its practices and observances. Whether the scene be laid in Athens or Troy, in France or Italy, the air we breathe is English air, the men we meet are English men. His readers were not particular. They did not know the minute details which would have enabled them to scrutinize the fidelity to costume of the dress the hero wore. It was enough for them that their souls should be absorbed in the interest aroused by his words and deeds.

For much of the so-called violation of propriety that prevails in Chaucer's work we can consequently apologize, if apology be required, on the ground of necessity. But this is not always possible. For many of the anachronisms which have been mentioned no such defence can be made. They could easily have been avoided without interfering in the slightest with the conduct of the story. Cressida, for instance, to use an illustration already given, could have been represented as listening to the tale of Thebes without being obliged to hear it recited from a poem not yet composed, by an author not yet born, in a language which did not even have a literary existence at the time she was supposed to have been living. This is a condition of things that could no more have failed to attract the poet's attention than it has that of his critics. We are consequently compelled to go back to the original statement that this treatment of his materials was not the result of ignorance or indifference, but was done deliberately, and with clear perception of what it involved. There is no escape from the conclusion that in works of the imagination accuracy of detail was a feature that Chaucer did not regard as wor-

thy of consideration; that the fullest knowledge of certain given facts could exist in his mind with the fullest indifference to them. In the one class of illustrations that have been cited, he would not have had the power to arrive at the exact truth, if he had the desire. But those of the other class show that he did not have the desire. This is to say that his theory of his art is entirely different from the one which has been much in vogue since, which has led men to speak of him specially as being either careless in his composition, or unable to rise, as one writer expresses it, to the true perception of the manners and social conditions of ancient peoples. Chaucer himself would clearly have looked upon an assertion of this kind as an absurd criticism based upon the incapacity to distinguish between what is essential and non-essential in poetry. This brings us at once to the consideration of another question upon the answer to which will depend, in no small measure, our estimate of him as a literary artist. It is clear that this violation of so-called propriety was done intentionally. Was it done rightly?

It is important to take notice at the outset that regard for exactness of detail in works of the imagination is with us not only a modern feeling, but a very modern feeling. It began to manifest itself with the rise of a body of learned men who in consequence of their acquirements came to look upon the truth of fact as being on an equality with the truth of life. To the former the early poet, whoever he was, could not often attain. For it he certainly never cared. He may or may not have been ignorant of it; he was always indif-

ferent to it. In the steadily increasing attention paid to accuracy of knowledge this has become a feeling with which the man of our time is less and less able to sympathize. It is indeed something which more and more he finds it difficult to comprehend. A good deal was said even in his own day because in one of his comedies Shakspeare supplied Bohemia with a sea-coast. It was spoken of with censure by his friend Ben Jonson, whose learning was always apt to dominate his art instead of subserving it. Sensibility on this point has not diminished since the period in which the dramatist flourished. Modern writers have sought to apologize for the poet's supposed ignorance or to explain it away. They have been careful to point out that the same sea-coast exists in the novel from which the play was taken. They have in some instances gone so far as to defend its introduction on the ground that one of the Bohemian kings purchased and for a while possessed a port on the Adriatic. By this means they save Shakspeare from the charge of not knowing what was known to most by crediting him with knowing what has scarcely been known to any one else. All this anxiety might have been spared if men remembered that for the accordance of his details with fact Shakspeare had no care. The Bohemia he had in mind was as ideal as the mystic Bohemia in which so many literary swashbucklers have ruffled it for a while to leave it at last with squandered fortunes and wasted lives. It bore as little resemblance to the province of the Austrian empire with the same name as the Arcadia of reality does to the Arcadia of romance. Its possession of a sea-coast was but one of a half-dozen

defiances of fact in the same play with nearly all of which it would be gross folly to assume that the author was unacquainted. His Sicily had a king which that country never saw. This monarch sends to consult the oracle of Delphi, situated no longer on the mainland, but on an island. He is stricken by the wrath of the sun-god. Yet he swears by the cross. The statue of his wife is carved by "that rare Italian master, Julio Romano," who had not been dead twenty years when Shakspeare was born. Even Puritans are mentioned who will sing nothing but psalms to hornpipes. To suppose that the poet was ignorant of this confusion of habits and persons is to suppose him not gifted with ordinary intelligence. He was depicting the men and women of all ages. The peculiarities of particular times and places were therefore, in his eyes, utterly unessential. In that world of the imagination in which the scene of his drama is laid no heed is paid to conflict of customs or differences of belief. There can be no inconsistencies, for men act according to nature, not according to the artificial distinctions of particular societies or the manners of particular countries. There can be no real anachronism; for the world depicted is one that heeds not the succession of events in mortal history, and everything happens in the eternal now.

It may be maintained that it is not fair to represent Shakspeare as having followed the methods he did in consequence of certain well-defined views about his art. The disregard of fact he displays, it will be said, was not due to his belief in any theory he held, but was merely a result of the carelessness that springs from hasty com-

[illegible] coupled with ignorance of a subject or hazy knowledge of it. Let us take, then, a man who studied his art profoundly. Milton mingles without the slightest compunct on the past and the present, mythological legend and Christian belief, classic allusion and Hebrew story, the growth of regions far apart. In the Christmas ode he follows Spenser in giving to the new-born Lord the title of Pan. In 'Comus' the Severn River rolls down beryl and golden ore, and its banks are to be crowned with groves of myrrh and cinnamon. In the 'Paradise Lost' the army of the devils moves to warlike music of the Dorian order. In 'Samson Agonistes' the hero of the poem refers to the tale of Circe and the Sirens. The fable of the Phœnix is introduced. The chorus talks of Chalybean tempered steel. There is even an allusion to modern artillery in the passage in which Samson speaks of himself as giving up his fort of silence when vanquished by a peal of words. These "outrages of local or chronological propriety" mightily disturbed the soul of Dr. Johnson,[1] though he tells us he pointed them out "with no other purpose than to promote the knowledge of true criticism," the question of what is true criticism being the very point in dispute.

It would indeed be easy enough to strengthen Chaucer's position still further by the example of almost every great poet whose references to events we are able to test by the light of his possible knowledge. Violations of fact are accepted not only without protest, but with praise, if the impression which is sought to be conveyed can be rendered thereby more effective. Nobody thinks

[1] *Rambler*, No. 140.

of censuring Gray for representing Milton's loss of eyesight as the result of writing 'Paradise Lost,' though we all know that his epic was not even begun till long after he had become blind. But it is of little moment to furnish additional proofs of this method of procedure. It is sufficient for us to find Chaucer's practice countenanced by the two authorities already cited, one representing the highest bounds which the imagination has reached, the other combining with the sublimest poetic genius the amplest and widest learning of his age. It is presumption or incompetence alone that can fancy that these mighty masters did not know what they were doing, that owing to more imperfect insight into the principles of their art they failed to attain that chastened propriety of diction which inferior men set up as the standard of correctness, and strive painfully to attain as a sort of compensation for their lack of power.

The truth is, that conformity to fact is a matter of slight importance now in the equipment of the poet. In the time of Chaucer it was of no importance whatever. Art has sunk to a low level when a vital element in a work of the imagination is the exactness of knowledge displayed in it. The presence of accurate statement in such a work adds little to its value. Its absence detracts from it only in the eyes of those whose literary tastes are subordinate to the results of antiquarian research. Doubtless there may be an unnecessary shocking of the historic sense in the ideal creations which the mind calls into being. Every writer, other things being equal, is bound to pay some deference to that general knowledge which can fairly be presumed to prevail in

his own generation, or which, at any rate, is held by his generation to exist. All beyond this is superfluity. It is worse than superfluity, it is productive of positive harm, if regard for accuracy of detail checks or in any way cumbers the flight of the imagination. Yet this is a danger which besets more and more the writer as the circle of knowledge expands and reaches larger numbers. He comes to feel that due praise will be denied the exhibition of his proper power if he chance to make statements that are not historically, geographically, and linguistically correct. As cultivation becomes more widespread and information more precise, there is an increase in the tendency to put archæology above art. A prosaic age refuses to be entertained unless the genius of the poet is chained to the car of historic fact, which about half the time is afterwards found not to be fact. It begins to regard the accidental as of more importance than the essential. It condemns what is true to life because it is untrue to the results of the latest investigations, or is out of keeping not with the way men thought or felt, but with the way they dressed. This method of criticism comes in time to be extended also to the productions of the past. In forming a judgment of its work the point of view of the artist is abandoned for that of the antiquary. This substitution of a prosaic statement of fact for spiritual insight is then declared the only way to give us a true picture of life. It is the more objectionable because while the pedantry of the proceeding is very real, the accuracy turns out frequently to be more or less of a sham.

Exactness in the statement of fact most certainly has

its uses. There is a field in which its observance is of supremest importance. But it works harm usually in proportion to its success when it sets out to encroach upon the realm of the imagination. Yet its presence there, where it does not belong, is often insisted upon with a strenuousness which is not manifested about it when it appears in its legitimate province. We virtually consent that the facts of history shall be disguised or wrested from their true meaning to serve the cause of the controversialist; but we protest against any disregard or alteration of them to suit the purposes of the poet. Yet any attempt to make them, not the supreme, but even a principal object of consideration, defeats the end which the latter writer has in view. It is just the same in the historical novel. If the novel is written for the sake of the history, the history may be good, but the novel is pretty certain to be poor. Herein lay the supremacy of Scott. He did not painfully study up his subjects, or make it his main object to guard against errors of detail. He wrote from a memory stored with legends and traditions of the past. If the general spirit of the time, as he saw it, was preserved, he cared little for exactness on minute points. Sometimes he consciously violated accuracy, sometimes he violated it unconsciously. In either case the novel is generally better for his ignorance or indifference. In 'Quentin Durward' he made the people of Liege speak a language they never spoke, and rebel and murder their bishop fifteen years before the event actually took place. The one variation from the truth was probably due to ignorance; the other was made intentionally, as

he informs us in a note. However fact may have suffered in either case, literature was the gainer of a powerful scene. In drawing it he was indeed true to art in its highest aspect, for it was a scene in which men were represented as talking and acting as under the circumstances they would have talked and acted.

It is precisely the same in Chaucer's creations. In the most impossible of them in one sense, he is in another true to the highest art. If a real knight had existed and had really told the tale that is put in his mouth, he would have brought in the same particulars that the poet introduced; he would have committed the same anachronisms; he would have made the same blunders, if we choose to call them blunders. Such they were not, however. The world in which Chaucer's characters move is subject to no limitations of century or country. In it no confusion of time and place can possibly exist. The poet appears in it as the master of human nature, and not as the slave of its temporary phases. Realism he sought, and realism he produced. But it was no mere realism of costume or of petty detail. It was the life-like representation of the feelings that sway men, the hopes that exalt, and the fears that depress them. It is because he depicted the permanent and not the changing that the fame of Chaucer has triumphed over the changes that have overtaken the language. We care not for the land to which his characters belong, or whether the clothes they wear are in accordance with its fashions. They are citizens of a larger country than can be found described in any school-book. We recognize them as men and women

whom we have always known, though no geographer may be able to point out the precise region in which they had their birth or have their home.

If Chaucer has been improperly censured on the score of propriety, he has been subjected to still more constant comment on the score of originality. This is a point that has been brought into prominence by the attention given to the sources from which he drew, or is supposed to have drawn, his material. It has at times seriously affected the view that has been taken of his literary position. The question of origins is one of those that are sure to come to the front in the case of any author about the production of whose works little can be ascertained with exactness. It involves, besides, a kind of investigation which is of absorbing interest to a certain class of minds. There seem to be those who think less of what a man has written than of what induced him to write it. There are certainly those who are less interested in ascertaining his ideas than in ascertaining the places, real or imaginary, from which he is supposed to have derived his ideas. This question is with them the one upon which their thoughts are mainly fixed. To the settlement of it their attention is almost exclusively directed. We need not refuse the praise to which labors of this kind are entitled. The inquiry into the sources from which a great writer gathers his materials is a work of sufficient value to be worth doing. Still, its value can be easily overestimated, and, in fact, is usually overestimated. In the case of an author about whom little is known, it is a matter apt to assume not only a disproportionate importance compared with

other matters, but an undue importance in itself. One singular result, moreover, comes in time to follow from this sort of inquiry, if once vigorously pursued. The tendency is early displayed to refuse the writer credit for having upon his own motion hit upon anything which patient research has succeeded in finding somewhere else. It is fairly certain to end at last in practically denying his capacity to originate anything whatever. If he has borrowed a number of his stories from ascertainable sources, it becomes the accepted creed that he has borrowed them all. If the original of any particular piece cannot be found anywhere by a series of most exhaustive studies in ancient lore or mediæval legend, in Western fable or Oriental apologue, the last thing that usually occurs to the investigator is to attribute the possibility of the invention to the author himself.

In the matter of originality it must be confessed that Chaucer has had hard measure dealt him from the very outset. A mass of unsupported assertion has in this respect gathered about his name which has steadily grown in volume with the progress of time. He is constantly spoken of as if he had been guilty of theft from previous writers, in a way and to an extent that are unparalleled in the case of any other author. It is no mere petty larceny with which he is charged; it is highway robbery on the grandest of scales. His own countrymen have united with foreigners in making and enforcing this accusation. That he invented nothing is assumed by all; that he stole everything is asserted by some. Even if any one set out to show that the belief in his supposed obligations to a particular author or a

particular work had really no foundation in fact, it was not done for the sake of clearing the poet from a baseless charge, but for the purpose of exalting some discovery of his own. Through his learning and sagacity he had been enabled to show that the opinion previously received was an error, and that it was from new and unlooked-for quarters that Chaucer had drawn the materials of which he made use.

This theoretical lack of originality, with the excess of literary larceny implied by it, has not always been imputed to the poet as a reproach. On the contrary, it has been much oftener spoken of as something to his credit. The robbery of inferior writers has been represented as a privilege which he shares with every man of genius, who by the mere fact of possessing genius has a sort of divine right to convey to his own behoof the labors of other men. Such a one is a heaven-anointed king, who lays hand on whatever comes in his way that suits his purpose, but makes what he seizes his own by the magnificent manner in which he resets and enriches what he has taken. Other authors occupy the position of feudal tributaries to this supreme lord, who can use their services to far better advantage than they can themselves. Chaucer has received the full benefit of this view, if it be a benefit. In his behalf plagiarism has been exalted into the highest of virtues. There has scarcely been any limit to the declarations of men who seem to think that they are doing honor to the poet by exaggerating his obligations to others. They are eager to assert or imply that the more he stole, the greater was his merit. After his chariot-wheels, if we

can trust their phrases, follows a band of captive authors whose spoils lend glory to the conqueror whose train they swell and whose triumph they adorn.

There is no over-statement in this language. Great men and little men, writers of big books and of little essays, have agreed in denying to the poet any genuine originality, or in exalting his literary merit at the expense of his literary honesty. Space is not sufficient to record all the doubtful tributes of these two sorts which have been paid to his memory. Mr. Wright, who discovered that Tyrwhitt was an incompetent editor, made the further discovery that Chaucer himself was nothing more than the "great translator" which he is styled by his contemporary, Eustache Deschamps. "It is singular," he says, "that a poet of so much talent as Chaucer should have written scarcely a single original piece."[1] This is a purely original discovery of that editor. No one has ever sought to rob him of the credit of it; no one, so far as I am aware, has repeated his sweeping assertion. Still, the most glowing panegyric upon Chaucer as a plagiarist is due to Emerson. In a highly laudatory passage, in which nearly every phrase contains a misstatement of fact or involves a misapprehension of meaning, he exalted the poet's glory by describing him as plundering, by the privilege belonging to genius, both predecessors and contemporaries. He did not even stop at this point. He made him anticipate the future by using the materials which men who lived after him were to amass. "Chaucer," he wrote, "it seems, drew continually through Lydgate and Caxton from Guido di

[1] *Anecdota Literaria*, p. 13.

Colonna."[1] Lydgate was but little more than a boy when Chaucer was writing, and Caxton was not born till some twenty years after Chaucer was dead.

There is, indeed, a virtue more than Spartan imputed by this theory to the perpetrator of literary larceny. The culprit is not only to be proud of the theft; he is not even to be ashamed of the detection. It does not appear reasonable that in this matter one law should exist for the poetaster and another for the poet. The view which holds that the former is created merely or mainly for the intellectual nutriment of the latter is due, it seems to me, either to ignorance of the facts, as in the instance just cited, or more frequently to a misconception of what really constitutes originality. Stated as it has usually been, this theory has certainly done the grossest injustice to Chaucer's reputation. He has been tried by a standard that has rarely been applied to any other dead writer. It is never applied to a living one. In the estimate we make of a modern author, the question of origins meets with the proper appreciation, or rather with the proper lack of appreciation, which it deserves. It is curiosity alone that leads us to ask, in the case of a contemporary, whence he has derived his plot. By most of us it is a point rarely brought up at all, still less is it largely considered. It is instinctively felt to be in ordinary cases a matter outside of the legitimate interest which belongs to the production looked upon as a work of art; and that is the only view of which the reader or critic is bound to take cognizance. If an author of established reputation tells us, as he sometimes does, what are the

[1] Emerson's *Representative Men*: 'Shakespeare; or, The Poet.'

sources from which he has drawn his materials, we are contented with his statement of the fact. It never enters our minds that his reputation for originality has suffered because he has derived a hint from this quarter, a suggestion from that, or an incident from a third. Even those of us who are interested in the problem of literary origins, to which most men are absolutely indifferent, do not usually make it unduly prominent. We do not regard similarity of events or resemblances of thought or expression as necessarily proofs of indebtedness. Nor do we seek on account of them to detract from an author's well-earned fame. On the other hand, if a case of manifest plagiarism should be proved against a popular writer, even his warmest admirers would not regard the fact as redounding particularly to his credit, nor would they go about making the claim that on account of his possession of genius there had been accorded to him a divine right to steal.

The slight weight we ordinarily attach to the consideration of the sources from which the modern author has derived his material is in large part due to the full information we possess in regard to other matters, more interesting and more important, connected with him and his writings. The question of his originals, or if he had any originals at all, falls therefore into the background. Unfortunately this more valuable knowledge is not attainable in Chaucer's case. A perverse industry, consequently, having little else to exercise itself upon, has devoted itself to the task of finding anywhere save in himself the sources of his inspiration. The results obtained, if they could be trusted, would deprive him of

any pretence to inspiration whatever. There is a wearisome monotony in the line of reasoning followed as well as in the conclusions reached. If the story Chaucer tells us resembles in the slightest an earlier story, he must have adapted from it his own. The situation was no better for him if the same plot had been used by a contemporary. He was the one that did the borrowing, not his inferior. There is scarcely any likeness so remote, any allusion so vague, any incident so trivial, that it has not been seized upon as evidence of his obligation to some other author, frequently one not read at all now, or if read once, never read a second time. If in his version variations occur from the received form of a tale, we are perpetually told that they must be due to some original now lost. Even when nothing can be found resembling in the least what he has written, any supposition is resorted to, no matter how unauthorized and unreasonable, in preference to putting upon the poet the responsibility for the slightest invention or even the slightest alteration. No original, for instance, has ever been discovered of the 'House of Fame.' It has not been discovered probably for the very good reason that no original was ever in existence outside of Chaucer's own mind. But in this production the Oise, a river of Northern France, is specifically mentioned, and a reference is made to the distance between it and Rome. An English author would not have been likely to make use of an illustration so unfamiliar; so, at least, says Warton.[1] For this reason he regards the work, singularly enough, as a translation not from the

[1] *History of English Poetry*, vol. ii., p. 165 (ed. of 1840).

language of Northern France, but from that of Southern France; though he brings forward as an additional argument for its having been derived from the latter quarter that there is a reference contained in the poem to the martial musicians of Catalonia and Aragon. It is almost certain that Chaucer never had read or could read anything written in the Provençal tongue. However that may be, Warton might as well have insisted on similar grounds that the 'Death of Blanche' was a translation from the Arabic, because the author declares that he would not have missed the hearing of certain music for the possession of the town of Tunis.

This sort of learned conjecture, petty in its spirit and inconclusive in its results, degrades the writer of it. There may be no great harm in this; but it has likewise the tendency to degrade him to whose writings it is applied. It tends to reduce the fame of the poet in the minds of many to the level of that of his commentators. It is exasperating to every man who feels that there is a respect due to genius itself; that its title to supremacy is not the gift of critics, but of Heaven; and that he who stands in the presence of the immortals should do so with head uncovered and with reverent heart. It is made more exasperating when we come to see that the theory it is used to bolster is false. It is not merely false because the facts upon which it is founded are false; it would be none the less false if the facts were true. It is false because it rests upon that mistaken conception of what constitutes originality, of which, as we have seen, we take no account in the case of the modern author. It is no difficult mat-

ter to show that it must be a misconception. Take, in the first place, the stories which exclude both the supernatural and the preternatural, which deal entirely with the incidents of every-day life under all its varying conditions. To this class belongs much the larger number of fictitious narratives, whether told in poetry or prose. In them originality, in the sense of pure invention, is not needed. Nay, more,—it would rarely be justified. For if originality is to lie in constructing the skeleton of the story, in the creation of events and the shaping of their development, or what is technically called the plot, there is hardly any such thing as originality possible, or at any rate permissible. The term we can only apply to something that has not come to somebody's observation or experience. For in the fiction that deals with real life there is scarcely anything credible that can be invented that has not somewhere, at some time, actually taken place, though not necessarily in the particular order of occurrence related. All things have happened; there are few things comparatively that have been recorded. This in its very nature is a limitation upon the capacity of pure invention. But there is a greater restriction still. We insist, and insist properly, that fiction of the kind of which we speak shall keep close to the facts of life, even to its most common facts. It may idealize them, it may exalt them, it may throw about them all that enchantment which gives them the power to charm or the influence to inspire. But it must not leave them. The farther it wanders from the probable, the more it is felt under ordinary conditions to be lacking in the highest art, the

more it requires the loftiest genius to overcome the repugnance of the mind even to accept as genuine a portrayal of scenes which may have occurred and yet are outside the round of average human experience. It is the most ancient of commonplaces that truth is stranger than fiction. It must be stranger. Fiction cannot afford to deal with what would contradict our usual experience. This it is that renders us indisposed to give credit, either in the sense of belief or praise, to the originality, if it can be called originality, which creates what has no plausible reason for its existence; which narrates what is not likely to happen; which represents men as acting from unnatural motives, and places them in grossly improbable situations. In no sense is this feeling a limitation upon genius, though it may be upon talent: for the greatness of the former, like that of nature, consists in the infinite ability it possesses to originate new effects by new combinations of old material.

There is doubtless a wider opportunity for originality in the sense of invention in stories wherein the supernatural or the preternatural plays a part. Art which rejects the improbable accepts willingly the impossible. The imagination working without the limitations of time or space, or without the necessity of regarding reality, has necessarily open before it a fuller sphere of creative activity. Yet even here its range is restricted; and that, too, in spite of the fact that it is aided by that belief in the ever-active agency of the supernatural, which, however stifled by education, lurks unextinguishable in the depths of the heart. Still, the mar-

vellous must depend for its success not upon its marvellousness, but upon its capacity of heightening by contrast the play of human forces and the exhibition of human passions. It is the catastrophe awaiting the mortal actors that absorbs the interest. The interference of the supernatural, the activity of the preternatural, must display themselves, consequently, within well-defined limits. They must set off the natural. They must not so attract the attention to their own manifestations as to render of subsidiary consequence the effects produced by their manifestations. But these effects are wrought upon human actors only. The conduct of these must therefore conform to what under the circumstances reason convinces us it would be the natural course for them to adopt. Here as before the invention of the author is restrained to the limits of the probable. If he overpasses them, he does so at the risk of repelling his reader and of sacrificing his art.

If the position taken be a true one, it is a necessary inference that it is not the invention of the story that is a test of the highest originality, but the treatment of it. Observation would as certainly lead to the same conclusion. Shakspeare, for instance, like nearly all the great dramatists, borrowed his plots. In places he follows his authority word for word. He takes the incidents of his story from the writer of some book. He might have taken all that he tells us from some events which he had heard of as happening in the adjoining street. What he did not borrow, what his author could not lend, was that originality of treatment which renders his productions something which it is not merely hope-

less to excel, but even impossible to imitate. Yet his distinction in this respect, though eminent, is not peculiar. The great poet or the great novelist, so far from seeking the unknown or the unexpected, takes usually for his subject some historic occurrence in which the course of events is plainly marked out, or some generally accredited legend, or some story of every-day life in which the facts are well and widely known. It is not the finding of his matter that constitutes his originality; it is the use he makes of it after it has been found. The materials to which he resorts are accessible to everybody. They lie before everybody's eyes. He alone has the genius to shape them into creations of beauty and power. That he himself should furnish his own materials as well as fashion them is no more necessary than that the sculptor should be under the necessity of personally digging the marble out of which he carves his statue.

One cannot but feel that these things partake of the nature of commonplaces. They are commonplaces, or, if not, they ought to be. Yet they need constant repetition, because the opposite view is persistently held up as a defence for what is both untrue in criticism and untrue in art. Invention may coexist with the highest order of genius, or it may not. As a matter of fact, it usually does not. Yet in every age a tribute has been paid to it, sometimes by genius itself, as if it embodied the highest form of excellence, as if without it there could be no real originality. Literary history is crowded with mournful complaints, which are limited to no particular period, that the plots have all been invent-

ed, the situations have all been exhausted, the stories have all been told. Everything has been anticipated. Nothing is left the writer of to-day but to go over again the drudgery of threshing out corn or chaff that has been threshed a thousand times before. In this respect everybody has always in his own opinion been born too late, and always will be born too late. Chaucer deplored it as much as the latest modern who has tasked his brain to set forth some incident absolutely new. The men before him, he said, had reaped all the grain of poetry, and he came after, glad if he could be so fortunate as here and there to glean a scattered ear.[1]

A similar view was almost formally adopted as the recognized literary creed in the days of Queen Anne and of her immediate successors. A certain amount of originality had been bestowed in the first place upon the world, and the earlier writers, by the mere accident of being earlier, had succeeded in securing possession of most of it. Everything had been said that could be said; the only thing that was left to do was to say it over again in a perfectly polished way. So likewise, almost at the beginning of his career as a novelist, in the midst of the production of his most marvellous creations, Scott took occasion to put on record a complaint of the impossibility of devising anything the interest of which had not already been exhausted by frequency of repetition and the consequent certainty of anticipation of what must be the inevitable catastrophe. "The inventor of fictitious narratives," he wrote, "has to rack his brains for means to diversify his tale, and, after all, can hardly

[1] *Legend of Good Women*, lines 69–83.

hit upon characters or incidents which have not been used again and again, until they are familiar to the eye of the reader, so that the development, *enlacement*, the desperate wound of which the hero never dies, the burning fever from which the heroine is sure to recover, becomes a mere matter of course." No doubt the first man that wrote was equally impressed by the perpetual commonplaceness of life and character. He was puzzled by the same poverty of striking incident, and wearied his head and worried his spirits to find a combination of events so new and a conclusion so unexpected that they would strike the reader with surprise, and yet so reasonable that they would not revolt him by their apparent improbability or absurdity. We have still a great deal to learn from Solomon when we can seriously suppose that anything has been done for the first time, or even told.

It would not, therefore, be a matter of material consequence if the imputations of borrowing that have been brought against Chaucer were true to the minutest particulars. They would not interfere with his claims to originality, in the proper sense of the word, any more than similar ones would with those of Shakspeare. Still, so much stress has been laid upon the point in his case, so hard has been the measure meted out to him, that the subject cannot be passed by without receiving an attention to which it is not entitled on its merits. One thing will come out clearly as the result of a careful examination. Futile as the accusations would be if they were true, their futility is made particularly conspicuous by the fact of their not being true. He was unquestion-

ably under great obligations to others. He was, however, under no such obligations as have been constantly assumed, so far at least as any evidence has yet been furnished. There would have been no need of discussing the question at all if men had been content to represent him as imitating the writers whom he himself professed to imitate and of using the material which he tells us they had furnished. But this is far from being the case. He has been charged with copying authors like Lucretius, whom he pretty certainly never read; with others like Plato, whom he could not have read; with others like Lollius of Urbino,[1] who never left anything to be read that reached Chaucer's time. In that sort of originality, indeed, which consists in discovering what never had any existence, the poet has been immeasurably surpassed by his critics and commentators. One or two instances of this have already been given. To record them all would be a waste of space; only a sufficient number of further illustrations will be furnished to make good all the assertions on this matter that have been made.

It is hard enough to be stigmatized as a borrower because one happens to say something that somebody else has said before. That, however, is the common lot of all great writers. It was the peculiar fortune of Chaucer to have been long spoken of by a succession of scholars as having borrowed from authors who were not even born when he died, or in some cases were in their cra-

[1] It ought to have been said previously that Speght appears to be the one who is responsible for representing the *Urbicus* of Lollius Urbicus as having the meaning "of Urbino."

dles when he was nearing his grave. It has already been mentioned that Leland represented Alain Chartier, who flourished in the fifteenth century, as one of the models upon which the fourteenth-century English poet formed himself. The statement was repeated without hesitation by succeeding writers, and finds itself duly recorded by Warton as an undoubted fact.[1] Even this chronological achievement was surpassed by others of the early biographers of the poet. Among the few additions that Bale made to Leland's account of Chaucer was the assertion that the Spanish writer Mena was one of the literary and linguistic pioneers whose efforts had added a spur to the ambition of the English author. Herein Bale showed himself to have caught the spirit that animated his original; perhaps he may fairly be said to have improved upon it. For Alain Chartier was really born some dozen years before Chaucer died, whereas Mena was not born till some dozen years after.[2] Both of these writers flourished for centuries as two of the chief authorities whom the man who lived before them imitated. Even at the present time they have occasionally been known to put in an appearance in that capacity.

The modern commenters upon Chaucer's originality have talked more learnedly but not a whit more wisely than the ancient. They have usually taken care to be right about their dates; it is in their deductions that they are wrong. The latter class erred from inability to hide their ignorance; the former from desire to exhibit

[1] *History of English Poetry*, vol. ii., p. 128 (ed. of 1840).

[2] It ought to be said that Bale professes to take the statement of Chaucer's indebtedness to Mena from Leland; but in Leland's account of Chaucer, as printed, Mena's name is not mentioned.

their knowledge. The observations of two of them only call for extended examination. These two are selected partly because their remarks represent fairly the general character of the criticism made; partly because they have themselves studied the poet's writings and are not merely repeating words about him borrowed from others; partly because they give specific illustrations which can be tested instead of the usual general imputations that defy investigation through their vagueness; and partly because their assertions have had an appreciable influence upon the estimate in which the poet has been held by scholars.

One of the two is a Frenchman. It was in 1859 that M. Sandras brought out a treatise upon Chaucer considered as an imitator of the trouvères.[1] He had for the task some qualifications by no means to be despised. He was possessed of a good deal of learning in that sort of reading that is not much read He was, moreover, a man of fair critical judgment, though this, hampered as it was by narrow canons of taste, never had an opportunity to display itself with its natural effectiveness. But the one thing that vitiated his whole performance was the belief with which he started. It was not definitely stated by him, but it was clearly held, that about everything in the shape of invention which showed itself in the literature of the Middle Ages owed its origin to the poets of Northern France. Italy was as much under obligations to them as England. Boccaccio was as much in their debt as Chaucer. That the same thing

[1] *Étude sur G. Chaucer considéré comme Imitateur des Trouvères.* Par E.-G. Sandras. Paris, 1859.

might occur independently to two persons, or spring up among two peoples, was a possibility that never entered the mind of Sandras. He is, accordingly, a distinguished representative of that class of scholars who go a great way to find nothing, and then come back to boast of the results they have achieved. Had he set himself to work to point out the unmistakable translations made by Chaucer of phrases, lines, or passages found in the writers of his native land, he would have done not a very great, but still a very useful, service. Such transferrences exist, and are often of special interest on account of the aid they are able to give in tracing the development of the poet's powers. But this was not the end Sandras had directly in view. Outside of passages which had already been noted by others, the results of his investigation added no very appreciable amount to the sum of Chaucer's indebtedness. His main object was to show that it was the plot, the groundwork of the story, that had been taken. This was something that in the majority of cases could not be done, for reasons that will shortly be given.

On the other hand, the work Sandras might have done, he lacked the judgment to do satisfactorily. He carried his charge of borrowing phrases and lines and ideas to an extent that would have rendered it an easy matter to bring a general indictment of plagiarism against the human race. There was hardly anything so common, so natural, almost so inevitable, that it had not been borrowed, for no other reason than that something like it could be found somewhere else. He succeeded, however, in showing to his own satisfaction that

Chaucer, while being an imitator of everybody in general, was in particular an imitator of the old French poets. "On every page and every line of his writings," he said, "a reminiscence of our trouvères betrays itself, sometimes veiled, sometimes apparent." He was throughout full of compliments to the poet's erudition at the expense of his originality. His imagination, he told us, is always the echo of his learning. Many of Sandras's illustrations of his assertions are taken from poems we now know to be spurious. It is consequently a source of some gratification to the cynical mind to learn by the method of reasoning he employed that the authors of these productions, whoever they were, were in possession of the same profound erudition as Chaucer himself, had studied as attentively the early French writers, and were affected by their influence as profoundly. For instance, according to his authority, Machault is responsible for the introductory portion of 'The Flower and the Leaf;' its allegory is suggested by Eustache Deschamps, and its conclusion recalls the *Lai du Trot*. 'The Dream,' or, as it is now often called, 'The Isle of Ladies,' was inspired by the writings of Marie of France, and various other productions which are carefully specified. 'The Complaint of the Black Knight,' now known to be Lydgate's, is also from a French source. Moreover, in all of these poems, and in the 'Court of Love' also, the influence of Machault is everywhere paramount.

There is, indeed, nothing more noticeable in the work of Sandras than the confident and superior way in which he discusses the achievement of Chaucer, points out the particulars in which he was inferior to Boccaccio, and

settles definitely his place in the roll of men of genius. His treatise is pervaded throughout by the tone of patronage with which small critics are wont to decide upon the merits of great authors. The impertinence is frequently so impertinent that it excites amusement rather than resentment. Nor is the expression of it limited to the poet; it extends to his editors. Sandras majestically rebuked Tyrwhitt for insinuating a doubt as to the authenticity of 'The Flower and the Leaf.' There was not the least reason for scepticism, he assured us. The work was written in the taste of the time; the language was not only the language of Chaucer's age, but of Chaucer himself; the verse was the same as he has elsewhere employed. It necessarily followed that the poem was an imitation of French writers, especially of Machault. The originality of this particular production does not concern us. The capacity, however, which Sandras displayed for finding direct indebtedness where other men would only see remote resemblances was not confined to the works now generally admitted to be spurious. Chaucer in a little poem on the variability of fortune—which is itself not improbably a translation—observes that the sea may ebb and flow more and less. The remark is not likely to impress any one as especially novel or striking. It might naturally have occurred to the most prosaic of us all under the most prosaic of circumstances. Sandras assures us that the thought was taken by Chaucer from a poem of Machault on the same general subject. In this a comparison is made to the effect that the sea is sometimes quiet and peaceable, and sometimes its voice is

terrible and full of wrath. No small share of the indebtedness which this French critic and other critics impute to the English poet turns out, when brought to the test, to be of this magnificently vague character.

It would be folly, indeed, to seek to deny or to lessen the obligations which Chaucer is under to previous authors. To do so would be to gainsay his own positive testimony. These obligations were numerous; though probably no more numerous than any great writer of his age under similar conditions would have been willing to incur. It is the extraordinary extent to which the fact of indebtedness has been pushed in his case that makes the imputation offensive. Moreover, many of the assertions made are without proof as well as without point. They have been manufactured for no other purpose than to exhibit the erudition of the person who brings the charge. Illustrations of this occur in the comments of Sandras upon the 'Parliament of Fowls.' He represented Chaucer as having put under contribution in this one poem Cicero, Statius, Dante, Guillaume de Lorris, Boccaccio, and Alain de l'Isle. That he also discovered traces of Machault was not wonderful; he discovered him everywhere. He was inclined to add Volucraire to the list; but as he had met with no evidence of imitation, he exercised sufficient self-restraint to put him only among the authorities that might have been used. No one is called upon to deny that Chaucer had read the writers just named. His obligations to one of them he specifies himself in the text of this very work, and describes with the utmost precision the passage he is adapting. It is to be regretted that Sandras, for his

own sake, did not in this matter imitate the poet he was criticising. Examples of translation occur besides those the author himself mentioned; but as they were well known, his critic devoted himself to the task of finding some that had no existence. He made the discovery that Chaucer drew his portrait of Nature from Alain de l'Isle. The sufficient answer to this is that Chaucer drew no portrait of Nature at all. He simply said that she presented herself in the scene which he describes, just as Alain de l'Isle had painted her in the treatise of his to which he calls attention.[1] He refers to this author just as in scores of places he refers to other authors; but the utmost he derives from him in this poem are a few scattered words and phrases. So, again, Sandras prided himself upon unearthing the original of the roundel of which Chaucer speaks in the ninety-seventh stanza. It was composed, he tells us, by Machault. From Machault Chaucer borrowed it. The critic had clearly never read understandingly the production upon which he was commenting. The poet did not say that the song which he wrote was composed in France, but the music to which the song was set. His obligation to Machault, therefore, if it existed at all, consisted not in translating any of his words, but in writing some verses of his own to a tune to which Machault had composed some words, or possibly the tune itself. The matter is of no special importance; it is interesting as one of many instances that might be cited to show how frequently the vaunted discoveries of Chaucer sources, when run down to their own sources, shrink into nothingness.

[1] See vol. ii., p. 345.

But a more aggravating illustration of this propensity to make the poet a mere repeater of other men's phrases and ideas has been furnished by one of his own countrymen, whose assertions on several points have more than once demanded attention in these pages. Mr. Wright defended Chaucer from the charge of having borrowed any of his tales from the prose of Boccaccio. So far he was right. Not a shred of real evidence has yet been brought forward to show that Chaucer had ever read a line of the 'Decameron.' All the resemblances that have been noted between the two greatest works of these two great authors, whether in the general outline or in particular details, are of the most superficial character. But while Wright vindicated the originality of the English writer as against the Italian, he was equally careful not to impute to him the possibility of originality itself. His stories were not taken from the 'Decameron;' they were taken from older French fabliaux, from which, for that matter, Boccaccio had himself taken them. The indebtedness thus remained the same; only the penetration of the scholar had pushed it a little farther back. "In fact," says Wright of Chaucer, "nearly all his poems are translated from the French."[1] In proof of this, he printed the original fabliau of which, according to his assertion, the Reeve's tale was the English version. This hitherto unnoticed production existed in a manuscript in the Library of Berne. The discovery of the use made of it by Chaucer is due to Mr. Wright. He added the English poem for the sake, he told us, of facilitating comparison. Comparison was

[1] *Anecdota Literaria*, p. 14. See also vol. ii. of this work, p. 215 ff.

the one thing it was not desirable to have facilitated. The conspicuous thing about this so-called translation is the little it has in common with the supposed original. The stories, it is true, are at bottom essentially the same; at least the central situation is the same after the clerks have taken up their lodgings at the miller's. In nearly every detail outside of this they are as divergent as they could well have been made in two different versions of the same incidents, written by two different persons at different times, and entirely ignorant of each other's work. There is not a single line in the two, not even a single phrase, that bears the mark of translation on the part of the English poet. Yet Mr. Wright assures us that there is only a "slight variation" between the two. To speak of the Reeve's tale as having been a version or even an adaptation of this particular fabliau, in the teeth of the evidence to the contrary which was printed, shows either a certain confidence in the credulity or carelessness of readers, or rather the existence of a certain wrong-headedness, not uncommon among commentators, which is willing to sacrifice the reputation of an author for the sake of enhancing the value of some fancied discovery of one's own.

The truth of the matter is that in Chaucer's time a vast number of stories were floating about in the community. They were sometimes committed to writing, and sometimes they were not. Whether transmitted by pen or tongue, they necessarily underwent change of form, as told in different places or repeated by different persons. They were the common property of every writer who chose to make them the groundwork of the

tale he was about to tell, or the poem he was about to compose. Where or how they first came into being would be difficult to discover in any case, and impossible in nearly all. The utmost that investigation can hope to accomplish in these respects is to ascertain not the place where they were invented, but the place where they made their first appearance in literature. It can readily be conceded that it was in France that many, and perhaps the majority, of them were originally committed to writing. It is not improbable, also, that to that country no small number of them owed their creation. It was there that the purely literary movement of the Middle Ages took its rise. There for a long time it flourished far more luxuriantly than in the neighboring lands. But the place of origin is something that can never be established with certainty in the case of particular tales, and, inasmuch as no one person or region can be regarded as having in them a vested right, the question is not one of special importance. However or wherever they originated, they spread far and wide. They were, in process of time, brought together in collections. Sometimes it was for the purpose of enforcing a moral, as in the *Gesta Romanorum;* sometimes, as at a later period in the 'Decameron,' for the purpose of furnishing entertainment. Several other works had been in existence, or came into existence, of a character similar to these two. But originality, if that word be used in the sense of pure invention, does not belong to the compiler of a single one of these collections. The vast majority of the tales found in them were, in fact, never invented by anybody, in the strict sense of that term.

They are simply the record of what had occurred somewhere.

In those days, too, when newspapers did not exist, and books of any kind were rare, there must have been a far larger number than now of professed story-tellers. They were always on the lookout for new things to relate. Whenever a new set of incidents sufficient to make an interesting story came to their ears, whether actually happening or merely the creation of the imagination, they made themselves masters of all the details; they cherished them in their memory; they repeated them whenever a fitting occasion presented itself. As a result, they kept them in constant circulation. Certain instrumentalities were likewise ever at work to effect changes in their structure. The incidents that marked them were always subject, in the first place, to those variations which follow from the incapacity of the average man to retell a story exactly as it was told, or to recite facts precisely as they occurred. Besides this inevitable departure from the original form, they would come under the influence of special agencies affecting their character. They would, as time went on, be altered by the retailer to suit the audience he was addressing. They would be modified so as to make the circumstances recounted in them more effective. They would be amplified so as to give them a more prolonged and sustained interest. They would often have added to them marvellous details in order to heighten their impression in a wonder-loving age. When, in particular, they fell into the hands of a man of genius, such, for instance, as was Boccaccio, he never supposed himself under the neces-

sity of adhering to the events of the story as originally told. He seized upon the most effective form of it, if it had more than one form; if not, he selected from it what was best for his purpose, and let the rest go. He shortened or enlarged passages in it at pleasure; he reinforced it with additional incidents, or embellished it with striking details; he enriched it with the wealth of his own wit or wisdom; in short, he gave it that imprint which took it at once out of the region of prosaic narrative and transported it into the realm of pure art.

There are plenty of illustrations of this truth to be found in the works of the poet of whom we are speaking. Contrast, for example, the story about the knight as told by Chaucer in the Wife of Bath's tale and by Gower in the first book of the 'Confessio Amantis.' Tyrwhitt thought the former was borrowed from the latter, or that the two were perhaps derived from some older source accessible to both authors. If we have to take a choice, the second is the only view that can be adopted; but there is no real necessity for resorting to either. The two tales owe their existence to what may be called a remote common original. But the variations are wide enough to indicate that the immediate sources of each were themselves probably different. Still, the plot is essentially the same; and for that reason the treatment of it is a most interesting example of the difference that exists between the work of the man of talent and of the man of genius. In both writers it is a fairy story that is related. In the one it furnishes the least possible entertainment, and certainly teaches no lesson. It is prosaic throughout. The idea that the

events recorded in it could ever have happened never presents itself to the mind. They could not have happened, had even the element of the preternatural been eliminated. In the other, the tale as told is full of wisest observation, of keenest insight into character and motive. The incidents, moreover, are woven together so artistically, and follow each other so naturally, that the reader loses sight or thought of the central impossibility that lies at the foundation of the details which have been built upon it. More than all, the story, starting from the earth, lifts itself up to and loses itself in that poetical atmosphere to which nothing but the highest genius can attain.

A more marked instance even of that originality of treatment which gives to the lifeless skeleton of the plot the vigor and unity of breathing life can be found in the tale of the Nun's Priest. This is a story in which hardly a single important circumstance is the invention of the poet. In some form or another it had been in existence for centuries before Chaucer was born. His immediate original, according to the present state of our knowledge, must be regarded as the *Roman de Renart*.[1] But the thing to be borne in mind is, that all which gives special attractiveness to this story has been furnished by Chaucer himself. The incidents are largely the same; it is the way they are told that imparts to the poem its peculiar charm. The vivid pictures of contemporary life, the learned discourses and discussions put in the mouths of the cock and the hen, the pointed satirical touches glancing at almost every pro-

[1] See vol. ii., p. 215 ff.

fession and almost every social class, the humorous atmosphere that envelops the action of the piece as well as the speeches of the actors—all these were things that could not be borrowed, because, outside of the poet's own creation, they never had an existence in connection with this tale.

In truth, the two tales that have just been mentioned, to the invention of which the poet has not the slightest claim, are not only interesting illustrations of his method of dealing with his material, but they furnish the most convincing proof of his genuine originality. The bare outline of the story he takes. He modifies it; he retrenches it; he adds to its details; he brings into prominence what will contribute to the impression it is designed to make; he sinks out of sight or casts away altogether what will weaken or destroy the main effect. The theme is sometimes, perhaps usually, widely known. Under most circumstances it is likely to have been well worn. It is the variations which he has introduced into it that have converted it from a production fitted merely to suit the taste of a particular age into a cherished possession of all time. Chaucer is never so much the literary artist, never so much original in the proper sense of the word, as when he is dealing at his own free will with some story which he is commonly credited with borrowing. His work is known and read of all men for itself. That which suggested it is known only to the special student, and is often read by him for no other reason than that the great poet is supposed to have read it before.

We can plant ourselves upon firmer ground even than

this. In nothing is the originality of Chaucer more strikingly seen than in the fact that his tales depend very slightly for their interest upon the invention. There are in them few striking situations, few startling surprises, few things that keep the attention of the reader on the strain. He is urged forward by no feverish desire to find out what may be coming next; he is not impatient to reach the conclusion. The interest rarely culminates in the catastrophe; it is diffused through the whole piece. The story moves on, to be sure, without rest, but also without haste. The most apparent exception to this view is the Pardoner's tale. In it almost alone the element of a startling denouement is introduced. Yet even in that its superiority as a work of art becomes evident when once it is compared with similar narratives, found both in Eastern and Western tongues, which record incidents of the same general character. The contrast shows clearly how carefully the story, as a story, has been worked up; how the surprise of the reader at the conclusion is enhanced by the incidents that impart an interest of peculiar vividness to the tale while it is in process of narration. The natural touches, in particular, which are given to the interview that the three drunken rioters unconsciously hold with the being they had set out to slay, cling to the memory and affect the imagination even more than the startling revelation of the identity of the All-destroyer with him who had bewailed his inability to leave a life that had long ceased to be worth living.

Nor, furthermore, need we for Chaucer's sake insist upon the plea of the rightfulness of plundering other

authors which has been pleaded so earnestly in his behalf. It has certainly been a generally received article of faith among commentators upon Chaucer that the poet took any good thing he found to his purpose. There is no need, as has been said, of a denial of this charge, so far as it relates to the plot. It is a matter of no consequence. It is only the inferences that have been drawn from the charge that demand contradiction. When we come, however, to the direct transfer of lines and passages from foreign writers, it may fairly be maintained that the position occupied is entirely different. Still, even here the plea has been set up that, while it is true that Chaucer thus appropriated the works of others, he was justified by the general practice of his time. The standard of morality, it is maintained, was different in that age from what it is now. This may be the correct view; still, we have hardly the knowledge sufficient to pronounce decisively upon the point. Men in Chaucer's day undoubtedly helped themselves with as little scruple as they do now to anything found in a strange tongue, and conveyed it to their own. They may or may not have acknowledged it. Upon that would now depend entirely their reputation for literary honesty. That they then did so sometimes is evident from the references to the original found on the margin of the manuscripts. These in most cases certainly, and probably in all cases, came from the author himself. But if he invariably noted his obligations, the copyists, who did not share in his sensitiveness on this point, would ordinarily not take the trouble to continue them. The writing of marginal references imposed additional

labor without being conducive to any good end, in the eyes of the scribes. These, it must be remembered, all belonged to the age of manuscript, when it was the things that were said that were of interest, and not the way they came to be said. The tendency, therefore, would be more and more to drop the references as time went on. The absence of them, accordingly, in any given copy or copies is no proof that the author himself had not originally admitted the obligation he was under. This view is made more credible by the fact that references appear in certain manuscripts of the same work and not in others, and it is usually, perhaps invariably, in the best manuscripts that they appear most frequently and fully.

Chaucer assuredly followed the usual custom of his time, and more especially of his nation, in the matter of borrowing from foreign sources. His indebtedness for special lines and ideas has sometimes been largely exaggerated. The attention paid to it has often had no justification in the facts. Still, that is a phase of criticism which is sure to show itself at some time in the literary history of almost every great writer who has a past behind him, and who has made himself familiar with what it has transmitted. No student is likely to forget the immense fungous growth of annotation, due to this cause, which for a long period overspread edition after edition of Milton, and has not yet been entirely cleared away. The text sank almost out of sight and memory in the superabundance of commentary. This was given up mainly to recording the resemblances which industrious dulness had secured by rummaging the forgotten

works of some authors and the works of some forgotten authors. Page after page was taken up in pointing out how Milton had in mind, or may have had in mind, some particular passage from some particular author; how this epithet or that phrase might have come from some poem or verse written often by somebody whom no one else but the discoverer had ever read. Chaucer would long ago have been subjected to the same trial, had not the process involved an amount of research to which scholarship competent to make such an investigation would ordinarily refuse to devote itself.

It is not meant to be implied by these words that the poet was not under great obligations to previous writers in the matter of direct appropriation. The subject in its details has been discussed elsewhere. Here it is only necessary to say that, in addition to his professed translations or adaptations, he inserted scraps from Latin, French, and Italian authors in his poems. Sometimes they were single lines, sometimes whole sentences; in two or three instances they were long passages. But so far from being the literary pirate he is often represented to be, there is scarcely an author to be found anywhere who is more scrupulous about acknowledging his obligations. The very epithet of "great translator" which Eustache Deschamps applied to him shows that he must have openly and fully avowed the sources from which he drew many of his poems. In one written at a late period of his life, he specifically asserts that it is a close version, especially as regards its metrical form, from the French of Granson. His desire, indeed, to give prominence to his authorities amounts almost to

anxiety. He frequently mentions them in express terms. He specifies by name Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Dante, Petrarch, and many others. He sometimes gives details, connected with the introduction of what he is going to say, that direct the reader to the passage quoted or to the writer intended. If he does neither of these, he is very apt to state in general terms that what he is about to tell has been found in an old book or in an old story told by men of a past race.

Chaucer, indeed, carries to excess the disposition to deny his own originality. The words he uses would have furnished some justification for his critics in this matter, were it not evident from their words that his had never been read. Examples are numerous. His 'Troilus and Cressida' is based upon the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. From that work, as we have seen,[1] about one third of the English poem is taken directly. Lines are frequently, and stanzas are occasionally, translated with fidelity. The remaining two thirds is, with slight exceptions, Chaucer's own invention, so far as we have any evidence. Yet he persistently calls the work throughout a translation. He apologizes for not telling certain things which might have been expected because they are not found in the work which he professes to follow. He gives again as a reason for telling certain distasteful things, that they are found there. In the proem to the fourth book he expresses his disinclination to relate the particulars of Cressida's unfaithfulness. Yet he must do it, because the tale has been so told by "folk through which it is in mind." There is exhibited by him in

[1] Vol. ii., p. 227.

another place in the same work an almost affected astonishment at his inability to record everything in the way of word or look or message that had gone on between his hero and heroine. For his failure to do this he defends himself from the attacks of an imaginary accuser by thrusting the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the author he is following. Here are his words:

> "Forsooth I have not heard it done ere this
> In story none, ne no man here, I ween;
> And though I would I couldè not iwis;[1]
> For there was some epistle hem[2] between,
> That would, as saith mine author, well contene[3]
> Nigh half this book, of which him list not write:
> How should I then a line of it endite?" iii., 498–504.

The necessity of faithfully reproducing his original is constantly impressed upon the reader's or hearer's mind as something that cannot and ought not to be avoided; and the remarkable thing about it in this poem is that nowhere is it more pertinaciously insisted upon than in those passages which, according to the present knowledge we have, are his own unaided composition.

Whatever may have been the special reason that led Chaucer in this instance to attribute to others what was due to himself, there can be little question as to his general disposition to more than acknowledge the obligations he owed to others. Instead of being stigmatized as indifferent, it would be more just to call him even morbidly conscientious on the subject of borrowing. There is never any pretence on his part of being inde-

[1] Surely. [2] Them. [3] Contain.

pendent of his authorities. If he varies from them, he is so little inclined to assume credit for it that he makes no mention of the fact. The one apparent exception to this practice was very likely due to the circumstance that he was then dealing with a semi-historical character which he may have deemed an historical one. About it he would therefore wish to give the reader no false impression. In the 'House of Fame' he takes his account of Dido from Ovid and Virgil. In the course of the poem, however, he represents her as complaining in certain terms not to be found in the writings of these two poets. These he is careful to tell us are his own. "None other author allege I," is the phrase he uses.[1] He writes as if fearful that the words he puts in her mouth would be regarded as utterances authorized by the two men whose account he has assured us he is following. The remark is characteristic. Were, indeed, Chaucer's own original manuscript to be recovered, it would not be surprising to find every author imitated in the text mentioned in the margin, or rather it would be surprising to find that such was not the case. His evidence, therefore, can be taken against his invention of stories of which no originals have been discovered. One of these is the Squire's tale. Mr. Keightley was of opinion that Chaucer himself invented this, clearly for the reason that anything from which it could have been derived had escaped his own researches, and accordingly could not be expected to have any existence at all.[2] Not much weight need be attached to this argument,

[1] Line 314.

[2] *Tales and Popular Fictions*, by Thomas Keightley (London, 1834), p. 77.

based, as it was, upon self-appreciation rather than upon appreciation of the poet. Still, as almost the single instance in which Chaucer has been credited with the possibility of possessing sufficient intellectual power to create a story of his own, the remark demands respectful recognition, though it cannot meet with acceptance. No source from which the tale could have been taken has, it is true, been discovered; yet that it was not original in the sense in which that word is used or misused is manifest from the poet's own declaration, without seeking for any other reason. He assures us that the falcon is to have her lover again,

"Repentant, as the story telleth us."

It is reasonable, therefore, to infer that Chaucer never translated from any author lines or passages without making formal mention of the fact. Time may have destroyed the memory of these acknowledgments, and copyists may have neglected to record them; but that they once existed is to be believed, if there is any force in arguing from the known to the unknown. Certainly no author of power so great has assumed so little originality as he. In his earlier works, in particular, so far as we can venture to call them earlier, he hastens to attribute his inspiration to sources outside of himself. He has, for instance, been poring over some old volume. After he has gone to bed, the events which he has been reading about during the day suggest the train of incidents that occurred in the dream he is purposing to tell. It is in this way that the 'Death of Blanche' opens. The poet falls asleep with Ovid's ac-

count of Ceyx and Alcyone in his mind. So at the beginning of the 'Parliament of Fowls' it appears that it is the 'Dream of Scipio' that has been occupying his thoughts while daylight lasted. This production is remarkable for ending with the most explicit acknowledgment by Chaucer of his dependence upon the writings of the past for the furtherance of his own poetical development. Nothing could be more unreserved than the following words:

"And with the shouting, when the song was do,[1]
The fowlès maden at here[2] flight away,
I woke, and other bookès took me to
To read upon; and yet I read alway
In hope iwis[3] to readè so some day,
That I shall metè[4] something for to fare
The bet,[5] and thus to read I nill[6] not spare."

This language is noteworthy. It was then the fashion in literature to tell what one had to say in the shape of a dream; and for the inspiration of his dreams Chaucer relies upon the books he may be able to read. References of this character are more abundant and more specific in his earlier works; still, they occur in what must have been his latest, though expressed in more general terms. By that time he had doubtless discovered that the incidents he narrated owed more to him than he did to the incidents. We need not claim that this disposition to parade his obligations rather than conceal them sprang entirely from a virtue which disdained any praise for that which was not its due.

[1] Done. [2] Their. [3] Surely. [4] Dream. [5] Better. [6] Will not.

Much of it can be reasonably ascribed to a pardonable weakness of human nature. These quotations and references were an evidence of learning; and in an age when few could read at all, it could not but be a distinction to have read much.

This defence of Chaucer against the charge of persistent and unacknowledged borrowing will not be deemed unjustifiably protracted by those who have made themselves familiar with the peculiar comments to which he has been subjected in this respect, and the peculiar standard which has been set up to test his originality. Such a defence is perhaps more needed at present than at any previous time. There are numerous indications to show that discussion of his writings is about to enter fully into what may be called the detective stage of criticism. His general greatness will be more cordially recognized than ever before. But along with it not only every idea, but every peculiarity of expression, is to be looked for in the writings of some one else. I should not wish to be understood as arguing against the desirability or importance of the study of the sources of an author's materials. It is the perversion of the results of such study to the disparagement of an author's originality against which protest needs to be made. A literary tribunal that exercises no higher functions than those of a police-court sitting in judgment upon the perpetrators of petty thefts is not one before which a man of genius can be properly dragged. Moreover, while the importance of questions of this kind need not be denied, it is none the less to be insisted upon that they are not questions of first importance.

They are sometimes valuable; they are often curious; but they are in no way essential to our knowledge or appreciation of the work of the poet as poet. Scholars engaged in these investigations are, however, much disposed to lose sight of this fact. It is well, therefore, again and again to make prominent the point that Chaucer is first and foremost a man of letters, and as a man of letters he must be judged. Where he got his materials may be of interest to the special student of comparative literature. It is of the slightest possible interest to the student of literature pure and simple. What he did with his materials after he got them is the supreme thing that concerns the latter.

In conclusion, all our judgments upon Chaucer's art must be modified to some extent by the fact of the frequently unfinished condition in which what he wrote has come down. It may be that to the agencies which brought about that result was due his failure to realize in some cases the ideal which in other cases he attained. In a previous part of this chapter attention has been called to the contrast in the perfection of his work which is exhibited in two portions of one of his tales. But there are several of his poems that furnish further evidence of the lack of final revision. They have in certain instances been put together without that superintending oversight which never loses sight of the harmony of details. Even more frequently have they been left actually incomplete. To whatever cause we ascribe this fact, of the fact itself there can be no doubt. The list of these unfinished productions is indeed somewhat formidable. It would be made even more so, were we

to add two poems—the 'Death of Blanche' and the 'Parliament of Fowls'—which, as it has been pointed out, terminate so abruptly as well as so tamely that it can be fairly said of them that they are broken off rather than ended. But the simple recital of the works left in an incomplete state is sufficiently impressive, without attempting to include these. The 'House of Fame' is unfinished. 'Anelida and Arcite' is unfinished. The treatise on the 'Astrolabe' is unfinished. The 'Legend of Good Women' is unfinished. Even the last of its narratives—the story of Hypermnestra—is unfinished. Add to these that Chaucer's principal production is very far, indeed, from having been brought to completion, and it is safe to say that no great poet ever presented to his contemporaries or to posterity so large a body of unfinished work.

The plan of the 'Canterbury Tales' was indeed laid out on a scale too gigantic to be executed save by one who had at his command unimpaired vigor and unlimited leisure. But the work is not only unfinished as a whole, it is unfinished in parts. There are, moreover, inconsistencies of statement by the author himself as to the extent to which it was expected to attain. There are other inconsistencies of detail which disturb the correctness of any possible calculation. These things show the lack of final revision. They probably show, also, that the poet himself wavered at times in his own mind as to the material he should include in the perfected work. At the opening of the general Prologue, he states that nine-and-twenty persons had assembled at the Tabard to go upon the pilgrimage to Canterbury. When he

himself is added the number becomes thirty. But in the description he gives of the characters in the Prologue there are thirty without including himself. As, later on, the Canon's Yeoman joins the party, there are necessarily thirty-two pilgrims in all, not counting the Host. According to the scheme marked out at the end of the general Prologue, each one of these is to tell two tales while going, and two tales while returning. The language is too precise to admit of any other possible interpretation. The agreement, as stated by the Host, is as follows:

> "This is the point, to speaken short and plain,
> That each of you, to shortè with our way,
> In this viáge shall tellè talès tway;
> To Canterbury-ward, I mean it so;
> And homeward he shall tellen other two."

This view is also borne out by the prologue to the Manciple's tale. In that the Host calls upon the Cook for a story, and it is nothing but the latter's drunken condition that prevents it from being delivered. Yet in theory the Cook has already told his tale. These statements are susceptible of but one interpretation. Consequently there should be in the finished work one hundred and twenty-eight tales. As a matter of fact the number of tales, complete or incomplete, amounts to but twenty-four. Not a single one is recounted by nine of the characters who are introduced in the Prologue—the Yeoman, the Haberdasher, the Carpenter, the Webbe or Weaver, the Dyer, the Tapiser or Upholsterer, the Plowman, and finally two of the Priests

who appear in the train of the Prioress. The work, therefore, so far as it was executed, does not contain one fifth of the matter it was projected to include. This, of course, goes on the assumption that the connecting links—which now extend to nearly twenty-five hundred lines—should be on the same proportionate scale as those completed, and that the stories untold should average the same in length as those told.

But this is not all. There are other parts of the work which imply, though they do not expressly assert, that but one story is expected from each of the characters while the company is on the way to Canterbury, and but one on the way back. In the prologue to the final tale—that of the Parson—the Host congratulates the pilgrims on the fact that the scheme he projected had been successfully carried out and was now almost finished. His words are,

"Lordings everichon,[1]
Now lacketh us no talès more than one.
Fulfilled is my senténce and my decree;
I trow that we have heard of each degree;
Almost fulfilled is all mine ordinánce."

Then he turns and addresses the Parson, and asks him whether he is a priest or a vicar, or a parson, and adds:

"Be what thou be, ne break thou not our play,
For every man save thou hath told his tale;
Unbuckle and show us what is in thy mail.[2]
For truely methinketh by thy cheer
Thou shouldest knit up well a great mattére."

[1] Every one. [2] Bag.

The natural interpretation of this passage is that the Parson has previously told no tale, and that the other characters have told but one. But if we assume this to be the plan which has been agreed upon, sixty-four instead of one hundred and twenty-eight should be the number to which the finished work would be entitled.

In either case the incompleteness of the work as a whole is unquestionable. But when we come to examine its individual parts the same characteristic is at times displayed. The tale of Sir Thopas and the Monk's tale can be thrown out of consideration. The former is stopped by the Host and was never intended to be finished. The latter is stopped by the Knight, but it never could have been finished, as the subject was as inexhaustible as life itself. But these reasons, good and sufficient in the particular instances just mentioned, do not apply to the case of two others. The Cook's tale, which from its opening promised to be one of the most characteristic and entertaining of the poet's compositions in his lighter vein, is so far from being concluded that it can scarcely be said to have been more than begun. The less than sixty lines which were written do not enable us to give a satisfactory guess as to the nature of the plot. The story told by the Squire is carried much further, but the epithet of "half-told" which Milton applied to it will cling to it forever. Finally, between some of the tales there are no connecting links, so that the work as it now stands consists of either eight or nine independent fragments.

But besides this manifest failure to complete what had been undertaken, there are numerous inconsistencies in

minor matters which show with how little thoroughness the task of revision had been performed at the time of the poet's death, if indeed they do not show that it had not been performed at all. In the Merchant's tale one of the characters, Justinus, the brother of the Lombard knight, is represented as quoting the remarks of the Wife of Bath upon marriage, which had been made in the course of the Canterbury pilgrimage. These, however familiar to her hearers, could hardly be expected to have reached the ears of the Italian nobleman who is represented as referring to them. The Second Nun's story, originally an independent composition, is inserted with so little care that she speaks of herself as a son and not as a daughter of Eve. There is a much worse instance in the case of the Shipman. At the opening of his tale, in discoursing upon the extravagance of women he identifies himself with them, and in fact assigns himself to their sex by calling them "us" and "we." This has made some modern editors feel the necessity of enclosing his words in quotation marks, though there is nothing in the original to indicate that the sentiments expressed are to be ascribed to any one but himself. It looks, indeed, as if there had been an intention originally to give the story to the Wife of Bath. Again, the Reeve is represented as resenting the Miller's tale because among his other occupations he practised the craft of a carpenter. But there is a regular carpenter among the company of pilgrims. If there were any one specially entitled to exhibit indignation, it would be he; but not a word is uttered by him in the way of expostulation. It is, again, a legitimate assumption that

Chaucer intended originally to put a prose narrative in the mouth of the Man of Law. The legendary story of Constance which is assigned him is the one instance of absolute incongruity found in this work between the character of the narrator and that of the narrative. The remark made by him in the prologue to his tale is really decisive on this point. After speaking of Chaucer himself, and of various poems which the latter had written—a number of which, by the way, he never actually wrote, so far as we know—he adds,

"I speak in prose and let him rymès make."

In order to get a satisfactory sense out of this line, in connection with the tale that follows, it has to be assumed that the Man of Law meant to say that it was his business to speak in prose in the practice of his profession. But that was the business of everybody in every profession. Chaucer himself, in the discharge of his duties as controller of the customs, could not have been in the habit of going about and reciting verses. There was therefore no reason for the Man of Law to assume any special distinction for himself in this respect, so long, especially, as immediately after this proclamation of his devotion to prose he set out to deliver more than a thousand lines of verse. But if we assume that it was a prose tale which the poet in his original scheme had it in mind for him to repeat, difficulties of all kinds disappear.

Additional illustrations of the unfinished state in which the work of Chaucer was left can sometimes be found also in the unfinished condition of portions of his

work which purports to be complete. In the second part of the Squire's tale it has been shown that this state of things is clearly due to the poet himself. But in the case of other productions, such as the 'House of Fame,' it may be due to the poorness of the manuscripts that have been preserved. In that poem there are three or four places where it is hard to make either sense or grammar as the text now stands; but all that is necessary to mention here is the perceptible gap that occurs after line 1943. The passage where it is found contains the description of the house of Rumor. In one of the two surviving manuscripts there is a blank left after this line; in the other a half-line is found. With one slight correction in the orthography this latter reads as follows:

"For the swough and for the twygges
This house was also ful of gyges,
And also ful eke of chirkynges,
As ful this, lo."

Here the comparison stops abruptly. It was never carried out to completion, or, if so, any manuscripts containing it have never come down. The printed text of Caxton—which is followed by Thynne's—attempted to get over the difficulty by inserting in place of the half-line this spurious line,

"And of many other werkinges."

This is as unsuited to the context as it is weak in expression. *Also*, found twice in the passage quoted, has there, as it frequently has in Chaucer, the meaning of "as"; otherwise, indeed, we should have in the third

line two words—*also* and *eke*—with precisely the same meaning. We can feel confident that the line in Caxton's text came not from the poet's hand, but from him who added the dozen spurious lines with which the work has until lately been made to conclude.

It seems hardly fair to hold a copyist responsible for this state of things. One feels that it must have been due to the poet's own neglect, to his disposition to leave to after-hours the correction of passages which he never found time or took occasion to correct. There is satisfactory evidence that the perfection his work attained was the result of patient labor. It would, accordingly, be no wonder if there should be found some places which his ultimate revision never reached. Yet there is a difficulty about even this view from the way Chaucer himself speaks of his own productions. No other inference could well be drawn from the language he uses than that he regarded the 'House of Fame,' for instance, as perfectly complete. If so, that completed form of it has certainly perished. But it has too many companions of the same kind for us to entertain confidence that it ever existed. It is impossible now to discover what were the causes which brought about the results that have been described. The unfinished condition in which so much of Chaucer's work was left may have been due to the pressure of duties from which he could not escape. His life was a busy one, and literature during much of it could only have been an occasional avocation. It may have been due to a sanguine disposition which led him to project undertakings which he had neither the requisite leisure

nor strength to accomplish, or to a procrastinating habit of mind that submitted easily to the necessity or desirability of deferring the performance of a duty to a time that never came. Or, finally, it may have been due to weariness of his subject, and even to positive disgust with it. Whether due to one of these causes or to all of them, or to some cause not as yet pointed out, the fragmentary state in which many of the works of Chaucer have come down is an undeniable fact. It is a result there is every reason to deplore. Had the 'Canterbury Tales,' in particular, been completed on the scale on which they were projected, we should have had a picture of the entire social and religious life of the fourteenth century, and to some extent of its political life, such as has never been drawn of any century before or since in the history of the world.

In the foregoing pages I have sought to show that Chaucer was not only a great artist, but that he became so at the cost of time and labor; that in him, standing at the fountain-head of English literature, the critical spirit was as highly developed as the creative; that the course he pursued in any given case was no accident of momentary impulse, nor was it due to unquestioning acquiescence in what was then generally accepted; that, on the contrary, it was the fruit of ripened reflection and deliberate choice; that it caused him in consequence to censure in some cases what his contemporaries approved, and continued to approve; that it led him in other cases to condemn at last what he had at first been disposed to deem praiseworthy. Contrary as are these views to those once universally held, the evidence presented

hardly permits us even to doubt their truth. If we need further confirmation, we can find it in one marked change that took place in his literary methods. In his earlier work he introduces constantly characters that are merely personifications of qualities or acts or sentiments. In so doing he followed the practice of his immediate predecessors. As he advanced in knowledge and judgment and taste he shook himself free from the trammels of this temporary fashion. He abandoned almost entirely the field of abstractions in which the men of his time delighted, and in which his contemporary Langland was contented to remain. For the shadowy beings who dwell in the land of types he substituted living men and women; for the allegorical representation of feelings and beliefs, the direct outpourings of passion. Changes of method such as these are not the result of freak or accident. Chaucer, accordingly, must stand or fall not merely by our opinion of what he did, but by our knowledge that what he did was done consciously. The responsibility for his words and acts cannot be shifted from him to his age. We can accept the convictions he entertained or we can reject them; but we can never dismiss them as not being in a genuine sense his convictions. He is not merely a man of genius acting under the influence of an inspiration to which he commits himself blindly and unreservedly. He is a force that must be reckoned with in all critical discussions of the art he practised.

It is impossible to take final leave of the poet without some notice of what is on the whole the most pronounced characteristic of his style. This is the uni-

formly low level upon which he moves. There is no other author in our tongue who has clung so closely and so persistently to the language of common life. Such a characteristic appealed strongly to the men who led the revolt against the artificial diction that prevailed in the poetry of the last century. It attracted in particular the attention of Wordsworth. The course of his predecessor he cited as an authority for the one which he himself adopted. He cannot, it is true, be always congratulated upon the way in which he himself carried his theories into practice. The invariable felicity of Chaucer in treating the simplest themes is made especially noteworthy by the frequent failures that attended the similar efforts of one of the greatest of his successors. For the acknowledged mastery which is conceded in this particular to the early poet means much more than at first sight it seems. It is difficult, says Horace, in a passage the precise purport of which has been much disputed, to say common things with propriety. In a sense which has frequently been given to these words there is no question as to the unrivalled skill displayed by Chaucer. There have been many men of genius who have been able to say grand things grandly. To the fewest of the few is reserved the achievement of the far harder task of discoursing of mean things without discoursing meanly; of recounting the prosaic events of life without becoming prosaic one's self; of narrating them in the plainest terms, and yet investing them with poetic charm. It is in the power of genius only to accomplish this at all; but it is by no means in the power of all genius.

It is because he stayed so persistently on these low levels that Chaucer was enabled to combine with apparent ease characteristics and methods that are often deemed incompatible. His words are the more effective because their very simplicity makes upon the mind the impression of understatement. The imagination of the reader fills in and exaggerates the details which have been left half-told. It is owing to this restraint of expression that whatever he says is not only at all times and in all places free from literary vulgarity, it never loses the dignity that belongs, as well in letters as in life, to consummate high-breeding. There is an exquisite urbanity in his manner which gives it an attractiveness as pervasive and yet as indefinable as that which the subtle evanescent flavor of arch allusion imparts to his matter. I do not mean by this to convey the idea that Chaucer abounds in ornate and brilliant passages, or that he is constantly saying remarkable things in a remarkable way. It is simply that in dealing with the common he is never commonplace. However trivial may be the theme upon which he is discoursing, his language always retains the air of distinction. As a further result of this absolute naturalness, he is enabled to pass from the gravest to the lightest topics without giving the reader the slightest sensation of shock. The border-land between simplicity and silliness is both a narrow and a dangerous one. It is beset with pitfalls for the unwary, and it is only the greatest masters that can traverse it with impunity. Chaucer treads its limited confines with a liberty which few, even of men of loftiest genius, have ventured to take. His freedom, indeed,

verges at times upon audacity. In the Knight's tale, for illustration, following close upon the high-wrought description of the great tournament comes the recital of the methods taken by the physicians to save the life of the victor in the struggle. The failure they meet with is told in the simplest terms. Their efforts were fruitless because they received no help from nature. Suddenly the poet interposes his own comment on the uselessness, under such conditions, of the medical art in words like these:

> "And certainly there[1] nature will not wirche,[2]
> Farewell physic! Go bear the man to church!"

With this quaint expression of personal opinion, he passes at once to the pathetic parting-scene between the dying lover and the woman for whom he is about to die. Yet these rapid transitions do not produce upon the mind any effect of inappropriateness or incongruity. Tears and laughter stand side by side in Chaucer's verse as they do in life. The gay, and at times almost comic, element that appears in the midst of exciting and even sorrowful scenes never jars upon the feelings. It seems to us no more out of place than the figures on the exteriors of stately cathedrals, where antic forms grin from every gargoyle, and imps are perched upon every coign of vantage, as if to impress upon the beholder how near the comedy of life stands to its tragedy; how inextricably involved is the tie between its lightest and most mocking moods and its profoundest mysteries.

I am not claiming for Chaucer that he is one of the

[1] Where. [2] Work.

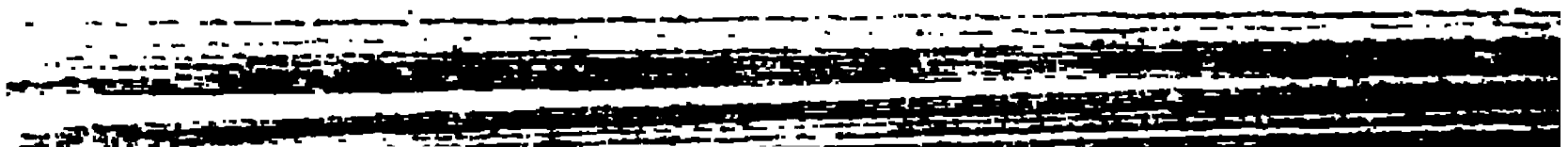
few supremest poets of the race. His station is near them, but he is not of them. Yet, whatever may be the rank we accord him among the writers of the world's chief literatures, the position he holds in his own literature is one that can no longer be shaken by criticism or disturbed by denial. Time has set its final seal upon the verdict of his own age, and the refusal to acknowledge his greatness has now no effect upon the opinion we have of the poet himself, but upon our opinion of those who are unable to appreciate his poetry. To one alone among the writers of our own literature is he inferior. Nor even by him has he been surpassed in every way. There are characteristics in which he has no superior, and, it may be right to add, in which he has no equal. Nor is the supremacy accorded him in these respects due to any consideration of his antiquity; though it can be easily admitted that to appreciate fully what Chaucer did for English literature we must first read the works of his predecessors and contemporaries. It might not be altogether amiss to add to the list several of his successors. There is one particular in which his merits in reference to the literature are simply transcendent. He overcame its natural tendencies to a dull seriousness which could sometimes be wrought into vigorous invective, but had little power to fuse the spiritual element of poetry with the purely intellectual. Into the stolid English nature, which may be earnest, but evinces an almost irresistible inclination towards heaviness, he brought a lightness, a grace, a delicacy of fancy, a refined sportiveness even upon the most unrefined themes, which had never been known before save on the most

infinitesimal scale, and has not been known too much since.

Nor is this the only distinctive characteristic in which Chaucer excels. There is no other English author so absolutely free, not merely from effort, but from the remotest suggestion of effort. Shakspeare mounts far higher; yet with him there are times when we seem to hear the flapping of the wings, to be vaguely conscious that he is lashing his imagination to put forth increased exertions. But in Chaucer no slightest trace of strain is to be detected. As on the lower levels the line never labors, so on the higher he never makes the impression that he is trying to make an impression. It is the absolute ease with which he rises that often prevents our perceiving how rapidly he has risen. We have suddenly been transported into another atmosphere without the least consciousness on our part of the extent of the distance traversed. In this the poet is like his own picture of Fame. At one moment the goddess seems to the visitor at her temple to be hardly the length of a cubit. In an instant, and almost before he is aware of what has taken place, she stands before his wondering eyes with her feet resting upon the earth and her head touching the heights of highest heaven. Nor is it alone for the naturalness and ease which results from this union of strength and simplicity that the greatest of his successors have delighted to honor the poet. Full as willingly have they paid homage to the qualities of character displayed in his works as to those of intellect. In perfect serenity of spirit as well as in perfect sanity of view; in the large-hearted toleration which could not speak bit-

terly even of the vicious; in the gracious worldliness which never hardened into the callousness of insensibility; in the manly tenderness which never degenerated into sentimentality; in the repose of conscious strength which never wearied itself or worried itself in striving for effect;—in all of these characteristics, the royal line of English poets has never refused to acknowledge the supremacy of him whom it recognizes as its founder.

# APPENDIX



# APPENDIX

THE interest that is now taken in Chaucer is so great and widespread that it is not unreasonable to hope that with so many workers in the field discoveries of importance may any day be brought to light. During the time in which the preceding pages have been going through the press two or three additions have been made to our previous knowledge of the poet's writings. For the sake of bringing, as far as possible, the information contained in this work up to date, I subjoin in this appendix certain particulars that came too late to be inserted in their proper place.

To the London 'Athenæum' of April 4, 1891 (p. 440), the indefatigable Early-English scholar Professor Skeat communicated a hitherto unknown love-poem of Chaucer's, which he had discovered in a manuscript belonging to the Bodleian Library. It is of a somewhat humorous nature, partaking more of the character of *vers de société* than of the expression of fervid passion. It is in the form of a ballade in three eight-line stanzas, but without any envoy. Though not a great poem, it is a good one of its kind, and is so distinctively Chaucerian in its manner that it could pretty safely be imputed to him even without the authority of the scribe. Fortunately that is not lacking. The evidence in favor

of its genuineness is therefore both internal and external. It should, and doubtless will, be included in all future editions of the poet's works. It furnishes an additional number to the titles given as certainly genuine on p. 504 of vol. i. and p. 3 of vol. ii. It will also add twenty-four lines to the number of lines given on the page that has just been mentioned, and will modify the statements made on pp. 308 and 309 of vol. iii.

Furthermore, the statements made on p. 207 of vol. ii. in regard to the writings of Granson need correction. To vol. xix. of 'Romania' (1890) M. Arthur Piaget has contributed two articles, entitled *Oton de Granson et ses Poésies*. The first (p. 237 ff.) contains an account of Granson's life. The second (p. 403 ff.) contains an account of his poetry. From this latter it appears that the poem of Chaucer that goes under the name of the 'Complaint of Venus' is made up of three distinct and independent ballades of Granson. They are numbered respectively in the second article as the sixth, the ninth, and the tenth of his poems. The two last of the French ballades are in general translated faithfully; but in the case of the first there is a good deal of variation from the original. In one respect there is a very marked variation throughout. In the three poems of Granson it is a man who speaks and who celebrates the woman with whom he is in love. But in Chaucer's adaptation this has been entirely reversed. There it is a woman who is represented as speaking in praise of the man she loves.

One thing more M. Piaget establishes very clearly. He points out that there is no ground for giving to

Chaucer's poem the title of the 'Complaint of Venus.' This, indeed, is almost self-evident. Were such its proper heading, Venus would be represented according to the seventh stanza as being bound in her own snare, and as having been long in her own service. The title under which the poem has regularly gone was pretty certainly the work of the scribes, and was probably given by them to it under the impression that it was a kind of counterpart to the poem called the 'Complaint of Mars.' This revelation of the original sources of the poem effectually disposes of the report—for it is not stated as a fact—made by the scribe Shirley, that Granson made this poem, "for Venus resembled to my lady of York answering the 'Complaint of Mars.'" On this point M. Piaget shows that the evidence of date is decisive.

While recognizing the great obligation which all students of Chaucer are under to M. Piaget for the new information contained in his articles, I am inclined to think he has somewhat misunderstood Chaucer's statement in the envoy to this piece, in which the poet says that he has followed "word by word" his original. This he most assuredly has not done in several places. But "word by word" has here pretty certainly the general sense of 'precisely,' 'exactly'; and what Chaucer means to say is not that he has accurately reproduced the language and ideas of the original, but the "curiosity"—that is, the elaborate and intricate arrangement—of its rymes.

One other place which needs correction it may be well to point out also. The student of the genuineness

of the 'Romance of the Rose' will observe that in one place the appendix corrects a slight error made in the text. In the latter it is said on p. 92 of vol. ii. that the single instance of variation between Chaucer and the translator is in the use of the phrases *withouten* or *out of drede*, but that even this is not important. Unimportant as it is, the results of the revised examination which appear on p. 545 of the same volume show that it does not exist; that here as well as elsewhere there is exact harmony in the usage of the two. *Withouten drede* is found in the 'Romance of the Rose' seven times, and in Chaucer's writings seventeen; *out of drede* is correspondingly found in each eight times and twenty times.

The statements made about Seneca on p. 269 of vol. ii. also need modification. The words which Chaucer attributes to that philosopher in the Wife of Bath's tale—

"Glad poverte is an honeste thyng certayn"— 327.

are a translation of a maxim to be found in the second of Seneca's Epistles. He in turn professes to derive it from Epicurus. *Honesta res est læta paupertas* is the original Chaucer had in mind.

It may be added also that the volume mentioned in the foot-note to p. 154, of vol. iii. has been received since that page went to press. As was perhaps to be expected, the work turns out to be one which had nothing to do with Chaucer beyond the fact that it assumed his name and the title of his principal work.

I would furthermore suggest that the town of Retters mentioned on p. 57 of vol. i. is pretty certainly Réthel, in the present department of Ardennes. The name of this

place appears in Froissart as Reters, Rethiers, and at least once as Retheirs. The first is the form which is most commonly found. What must have been an earlier form, Reterst, is said to occur in the later chronicler, Monstrelet. The town is in Champagne, a few miles to the northeast of Rheims, and was part of the region overrun by the English army in the invasion of France which began in 1359. During the siege of Rheims which then took place, the district of Reters, according to Froissart, was frequently ravaged by bodies of English soldiers, and this, he tells us, continued to be done by the troops left behind after Edward himself had moved on with the main army. The town of Reters itself was fortified. As it was before a place with this name that Chaucer, previous to his own capture, saw the Lord Scrope, it is in perfect harmony with every requirement that this should be the one of which he spoke in his deposition.

Finally I have to add the correction of a somewhat gross oversight. From the list of preterites and past participles given in vol. i., pp. 402–404, as ryming together, four instances of *had* as a past participle are to be struck out. These occur in 'Anelida and Arcite,' l. 37, in 'Troilus and Cressida,' iv,, 1688, and in the Clerk's tale, lines 520 and 722. In all these cases *had* is a preterite. All statements of number into which these instances enter need modification accordingly. In the note referring to Gower's usage *had* and *fought* are also to be struck from the list of examples.

# INDEX


A B C, Chaucer's (No. 64),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 443;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
source of, ii. 207;
Chaucer's religious opinions not shown in, ii. 485;
versification of, iii. 308.
Abduction,
three instances of, cited, i. 76–80.
Abelard,
ii. 290.
Academy, The,
cited, ii. 45 n., 72 n., 221 n., iii. 311 n.
*Achilleis.*
(See *Statius.*)
Achilles Tatius,
Loves of Clitophon and Leucippus, iii. 115.
*Acta Sanctorum.*
(See *Lives of the Saints.*)
Adam, his Scrivener, Chaucer's Address to (No. 61),
quoted, i. 229;
the danger indicated by, i. 233;
first printed by Stow, i. 441;
its genuineness accepted by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Addison, Joseph,
his text altered by Chalmers, i. 235;
on Chaucer, iii. 95–97, 104;
allusions, iii. 100, 150, 158.
Adventurer, The,
quoted, iii. 158.
Ælian,
*Varia Historia*, ii. 305.
Æsculapius,
ii. 393.
Agathon, unknown author,
ii. 400–402.
Age of Chaucer,
references to, in House of Fame, i. 33;
in Legend of Good Women, i. 34;
in Epistle to Scogan, i. 36;
in Complaint of Venus, i. 40;
by Occleve, i. 42;
by Gower, i. 43–48;
as shown in the Occleve portrait, i. 50;
as inferred from his selection for diplomatic missions, i. 71.
Akenside, Mark,
inscription for a statue of Chaucer, iii. 237.
Alanus de Insulis,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 344–352, 419, iii. 411;
*De Planctu Naturæ*, ii. 345 ff;
*Anticlaudianus, sive de Officio Viri Boni et Perfecti*, ii. 348 ff;
*Doctrinale Minus*, ii. 351.
'Alas,'
use of the word, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 91, 541, 542.

'Alas that I was born,'
Chaucer's frequent use of the phrase, ii. 84, 85.
Albertano da Brescia,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 384;
*Liber Consolationis et Consilii*, i. 321, ii. 211, 271, 384;
*Liber de Amore*, etc., ii. 384;
*De Arte Loquendi et Tacendi*, ii. 384.
Albricus Philosophus,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii, 381, 382;
*De Deorum Imaginibus*, ii. 381.
Alcestis, The Story of,
i. 261, 411, 417,
ii. 257, 293.
Alchemy,
Chaucer's acquaintance with the literature of, ii. 391–393, iii. 292;
his contempt for its pretensions, ii. 501.
Aldgate,
Chaucer's dwelling-house at, i. 73.
Aldrich, Dr. Henry,
iii. 81.
Alexander the Great, legendary cycle of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 303, 304.
Alexandreid of Gualtier,
ii. 303, 353–355, 412.
Alfred the Great,
i. 182.
Alhazen, Arabian astronomer,
ii. 391.
Alkabucius, Arabian astronomer,
ii. 398.
Alliterative verse,
i. 333,
ii. 105 n.,
iii. 20, 50, 299, 300.
Almagest, The, of Ptolemy,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 186, 395 ff.
Alone Walking (No. 51),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
Tyrwhitt on its genuineness, i. 480;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'Also mote I thee,'
use of the phrase, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 101, 550.
Ambrose, Saint,
ii. 388.
American Academy, Memoirs of the,
cited, i. 337 n.
Ames, Joseph,
Typographical Antiquities cited, ii. 359 n.
*Amicitia, De.*
(See *Cicero.*)
Amorous Complaint, An (No. 76),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Skeat, i. 452, 504;
classed in this work, i. 503 n.
Anachronisms, Chaucer's,
iii. 375–380.
Anderson, Dr. James,
imitation of Chaucer in his periodical, the Bee, iii. 131.
Anderson, Dr. Robert,
reprints Tyrwhitt's text, iii. 255.
Anelida and Arcite (No. 14),
its reference to the custom of reciting verses, i. 228;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 244, 254;
printed by Caxton, i. 265;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 402, ii. 73, 129, 141, 144;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 182, 184, 188;

books and authors used or named in, ii. 226, 240, 253, 402, 404;
Miss Barrett's modernization of, iii. 217, 227;
versification of, iii. 309, 311 n.;
incompleteness of, iii. 431.
Angle, Sir Guichard d', commissioner,
i. 69.
Anglo-Norman Chronicle.
(See *Trivet, Nicolas.*)
Annotation of Chaucer's works,
contributions to, by Speght, i. 270, 273;
by F. Thynne, i. 272–274;
by Junius, i. 281;
by Bagford, i. 282;
by Urry, i. 284;
by T. Thomas, i. 291;
by Morell, i. 295, 297;
by Dr. Johnson, proposed, i. 298, 299;
by Tyrwhitt, i. 302–305, 307;
by Wright, i. 319, 320;
by Jephson, i. 325;
by Bell, i. 326, 327;
by Morris, i. 327;
need of further study, i. 350–353.
*Anticlaudianus.*
(See *Alanus de Insulis.*)
Antiquarian interest in Chaucer, iii. 241 ff, 245, 257.
Apollonius Rhodius,
ii. 259, 260.
*Argonautica.*
(See *Valerius Flaccus.*)
Ariadne, The Story of,
ii. 251.
Ariosto,
iii. 205.
Aristotle,
Chaucer's ignorance of, in the original, ii. 193, 387;
reference to, in the Prologue, ii. 197;
Shakspeare's anachronistic reference to, iii. 378;
allusions, ii. 366, 390, 391.
Arms, coat of, Chaucer's supposed,
i. 162.
Armstrong, Dr. John,
on imitations of Chaucer and Spenser, iii. 130, 131.
Arnold, Matthew,
assertion about Addison, iii. 97 n.;
comparison of Villon with Chaucer, iii. 362.
Arnoldus Villanovanus, or "Arnold of the New Town,"
*Rosarium Philosophorum*, ii. 393.
Art,
controversy as to the province of, iii. 344;
Chaucer's view of the relation of, to morality, iii. 347–353;
defects of Chaucer's, on the intellectual side, iii. 364–375;
Chaucer's indifference to fact, iii. 375–391.
Art of Love.
(See *Ovid.*)
*Arte Loquendi et Tacendi, De.*
(See *Albertano da Brescia.*)
Artist, Literary, Chaucer as a.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. viii.*)
Arthur, Prince, legendary cycle of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 303, 304, 315, 316, 368;
sceptical attitude of Chaucer towards, ii. 496.
Asceticism,
Chaucer's aversion to, ii. 535, 536.
Ascham, Roger,
styles Chaucer the English Homer, iii. 42;
on blank verse, iii. 49.
Ashmole, Elias,
on Chaucer's attitude towards alchemy, ii. 502.

'As I guess,'
use of the phrase, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 99, 548, 549.
Assembly of Ladies (No. 15),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Assonant ryme,
as a test of genuineness, i. 375, 394–398, ii. 58, 59.
Astrolabe, The Conclusions of the (No. 16),
autobiographic material in, i. 101;
mentioned by Leland, i. 140, 145;
its prose, i. 205, 208;
Brae's Appendix to, cited, i. 308;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420;
omitted by the early printers, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 397 ff;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 498, iii. 285;
incompleteness of, iii. 431.
Astrology, judicial,
Chaucer's attitude towards, ii. 497–499.
Astronomy and its literature,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 395–399.
Athenæum, The (London),
discovery of Cecilia Chaumpaigne deed of release announced in, i. 74;
cited, i. 119 n., ii. 9 n., 409 n.
Atiteris,
i. 245.
Atterbury, Francis,
iii. 242.
Attorney, Letters of,
given by Chaucer, i. 70.
Attribution of works to Chaucer,
reasons for, i. 364–366.
Aubrey, John,
sketch of Chaucer's life, i. 159, 179.
Augustine, Saint,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 297–299, 383, 388;
*De Civitate Dei*, ii. 298;
*Sermo cccliii*, ii. 299 n.;
allusion, ii. 277.
*Aureolus Theophrasti Liber de Nuptiis.*
(See *Theophrastus.*)
Authorities, Citation of,
customary in Chaucer's time, ii. 194, 195, 233;
his practice as to, ii. 413–415, iii. 420–429.
Authors and reviewers,
Antagonism of, as old as literature, iii. 283.
Autograph, Chaucer's,
Disappearance of all official documents bearing, i. 118, 119.
Avicenna, medical writer,
ii. 393, 394.

Bacon, Lord,
on Latin translations, iii. 82, 83, 140.
allusion, ii. 247.
Bacon, Roger,
ii. 277.
Bagford, John,
i. 162, 282.
Balboa,
Keats's error as to, ii. 191.
Bale, John,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 132, 133, 148, 149, 158, 467, ii. 169, iii. 35, 36, 406.
Ballades, Chaucer's,
iii. 308, 309, 310, 312, 316.
Bancks, J.,
on change in language, iii. 143.

Banquet, The.
(See *Plato.*)
Barbour, John,
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 37, 50, 93, 100, 112, 113, 116, 156, 544 ff;
estimate of, by later Scotch critics, iii. 15.
Barclay, Alexander,
iii. 305.
Barrett, Miss.
(See *Browning, Mrs. E. B.*)
Baskerville, John,
iii. 159.
Battle Abbey Roll,
i. 163.
Beaumont, Francis,
letter to Speght, i. 271, 273, 442, iii. 44, 59, 352;
allusion, iii. 66.
Beauveau, Pierre, Seigneur de,
statement as to author of the *Filostrato*, ii. 235.
Becanus, Joannes Goropius,
ii. 440, 443.
Bech, M.,
article in *Anglia*, ii. 186, 188 n., 260 n., 281 n., 314 n.
Becon, Thomas,
quoted, ii. 321.
Bee, The,
iii. 131, 192.
Bell, Robert,
his edition of Chaucer's poetical works, i. 325–327, ii. 10, 279 n., 386 n.;
poems added by, i. 449–451;
spurious pieces included by, i. 478;
joins in the last of the modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 217 ff.
*Belle Dame sans Mercy, La* (No. 13),
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
printed by Pynson, i. 435;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 474;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Bellona and Pallas,
considered as one by Chaucer, ii. 184.
*Beneficiis, De.*
(See *Seneca.*)
Benoît de Sainte-More,
*Roman de Troye*, i. 303, 304, ii. 309 ff.
Berkeley, Sir Edward,
commissioner, i. 70.
Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 388, 389;
*Tractatus ad Laudem Gloriosæ Virginis Matris*, ii. 389.
Bernardus Silvestris,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 385;
*Megacosmos*, ii. 385;
*Microcosmos*, ii. 385.
Berni, Francesco,
iii. 205.
Berthelet, Thomas,
i. 138, 139, 146, 147.
Beryn, The History of (No. 68),
added to the list of Chaucer's poems by Urry, i. 289, 448;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 476;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Bestiary entitled *Physiologus*,
ii. 336, 337, 419.
Betterton, Thomas,
his modernizations of Chaucer,
iii. 186, 187, 189, 190, 191.
Bevis of Hampton, Sir, Romance of,
ii. 201.
Bible, The,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 187, 389; his critical treatment of, ii. 509;
its plain-speaking, iii. 359.
Biographia Britannica,
i. 190.
Biography and men of letters,
i. 3–7.
Birth of Chaucer, date of,
the 1328 date an error, i. 51, 52;

argument for 1340 date, i. 18–32;
the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy, i. 18–20, 22–27;
the Prince Lionel accounts, i. 20, 21, 28–31;
Ceyx and Alcyone reference, i. 21, 22, 31, 32;
argument for a date earlier than 1340, i. 33–50;
references to age in his own writings, i. 33–42;
by contemporaries, i. 42–48;
individual longevity, i. 48, 49;
the Occleve portrait, i. 50;
limits of probable date, i. 53.
Birthplace of Chaucer,
London, i. 14;
Oxfordshire or Berkshire, i. 133, 152;
Woodstock, i. 153;
theories as to, i. 160, 161.
Bishop, William,
preface to Pits's account of English writers, iii. 35.
Black Knight, The Complaint of the (No. 17),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
its genuineness discussed, i. 480–482;
attributed to Lydgate, i. 481;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Dart's modernization of, iii. 200;
Sandras on, iii. 409.
Black-letter abandoned,
i. 292–294, iii. 278.
Blackmore, Sir Richard,
i. 334.
Blackwood's Magazine,
prints a modernization of the Clerk's tale, iii. 212.
Blades, William,
cited, i. 264, 429.
Blanche of Lancaster,
i. 21, 26.
Blank verse,
iii. 48, 49.
Blind Harry,
i. 329.
Blount, Thomas Pope,
sketch of Chaucer's life, i. 159.
Boccaccio,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 186, 225–236, 248, 256, 417, iii. 411;
*Teseide*, i. 345, ii. 204, 225 ff, 252, 403, 514, iii. 169;
*De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium*, i. 358, 419, ii. 159, 231, iii. 12, 332;
*Liber de Montibus, Sylvis*, etc., ii. 181 n.;
*De Genealogia Deorum*, ii. 184, 232, 262, 287, 407, 408.
*Filostrato*, ii. 205 n., 225, 227, 235, 236, 241, 313;
*Decameron*, ii. 228 ff, 249, iii. 341, 413, 415;
*De Claris Mulieribus*, ii. 231;
his greatest service to the Italian race, ii. 454;
Sandras on, iii. 407, 409;
allusion, iii. 136.
Boethius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, i. 203, 361, 452, ii. 29, 120, 193, 208, 241, 249, 261, 265–267, 383, 416, 419;
*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, i. 181, 184, 203, ii. 29, 266, 334, 346, iii. 373, 374;
*De Musica*, ii. 266, 390.
(See *The Consolation of Philosophy*.)
Boileau,
*Art Poëtique*, iii. 102, 109.
Bolton, Edmund,
on authorities for choice of words, iii. 60, 61.
Bombastic, Chaucer's freedom from the, iii. 326.
*Bon Consail, Balade de* (No. 42),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 438;

attributed to Lydgate, i. 438;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Bond, Edward Augustus,
discovery by, i. 20, 21, 28.
Bonham, William,
publisher, i. 269.
Book of Cupid, The.
(See *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale.*)
Book of the Duchess, The.
(See *The Death of Blanche.*)
Book of the Lion, The.
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
supposed original of, i. 423, ii. 214.
Books,
Chaucer's love of, ii. 195–200;
prices of, in the fourteenth century, ii. 196, 197.
"Boozy Chaucer," iii. 239.
Boswell, James, the younger,
i. 333.
Bowles, Rev. William Lisle,
commendation of Mason's Musæus, iii. 128.
Boyse, Samuel,
modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 199.
Bradshaw, Henry,
discoveries by, i. 147, 250, 267, 452;
cited, 435 n., 436 n., 476 n.;
on genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 16, 17;
on Lollius, ii. 413.
Bradwardine, Thomas,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 382, 383;
*De Causa Dei*, ii. 382.
Brae, Andrew Edmund,
references to his edition of the Astrolabe, i. 208, 308, ii. 398.
Braithwaite, Richard,
Comment upon Two Tales of Chaucer, iii. 89–91, 92, 110;
his style illustrated, iii. 90.
*Brevitate Vitæ, De.*
(See *Seneca.*)
Brewer, Prof.,
styles Chaucer a Wycliffite, ii. 460.
Brigham, Nicholas,
i. 94, 150 n.
Brittle, Richard,
i. 86.
Brock, Edmund,
translator of Trivet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle, ii. 210.
Brooch of Vulcan, The.
(See *The Complaint of Mars.*)
Brooke, Henry,
modernization of Man of Law's tale, iii. 190, 192, 193, 194, 196, 199.
Broome, William,
executor of Urry, i. 290.
Browning, Mrs. E. B.,
on Lydgate, iii. 26;
joins in the last of the modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 214–229.
Browning, Robert,
allusions, iii. 150, 214.
Brutus and Cassius,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 184.
Brutus, mythical King of Britain,
i. 132,
ii. 316.
Buckholt, Isabella,
sues Chaucer, i. 88.
Buckley, Master,
i. 172.
Budgell, Eustace,
iii. 192.
Bukton, Epistle to (No. 9),
autobiographic material in, i. 112–115, 361;
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
its reference to the Wife of Bath's tale, ii. 522.
Bulwer-Lytton, Edward (Lord Lytton),
iii. 214.

Burghersh, Matilda,
wife of Thomas Chaucer, i. 102.
Burley, John,
sent on secret service with Chaucer, i. 68.
Busirus and Diomedes,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 184.
'By God,'
use of the oath, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 99, 550.
'By Saint Charity,'
Chaucer's oath of, ii. 216.
Byron, George Gordon, Lord,
a printer's error in his apostrophe to the ocean, i. 230;
on Chaucer, iii. 260, 261;
allusion, i. 167.

Cæsar, Julius,
ii. 184, 254, 274.
Callisthenes,
ii. 303.
Camden Society,
its publication of Milton's commonplace book, iii. 76.
Camden, William,
i. 153, 160.
Campbell, Thomas,
on Pope's modernization of Chaucer's House of Fame, iii. 184, 185;
his admiration for Chaucer, iii. 259.
Canon's Yeoman's tale, The,
tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 388, ii. 13, 115, 141, 142, 144, 147;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 351, 360, 392;
its exposure of alchemy, ii. 501, 502.
Canterbury tale,
as a designation of an improbable story, iii. 41.
Canterbury Tales, The (No. 1),
autobiographic material in, i. 68, 108, 170, 191, 358;
mentioned by Leland, i. 139;
Hertzberg's German version of, i. 201;
prose of, i. 205;
number of manuscripts of, i. 239, 340;
Caxton's editions of, i. 263, 264;
Thynne's, i. 265, 268, 278;
Urry's edition of, i. 284, 286, 289;
Morell's, i. 296;
Tyrwhitt's, i. 301, 309, 316, iii. 254, 255;
J. Bell's reprint of Tyrwhitt's edition of, i. 311, iii. 255;
Wright's edition of, i. 316, 318. 319;
R. Bell's, i. 324;
Morris's, i. 327;
texts of, printed by the Chaucer Society, i. 340, ii. 226;
further annotation of, needed, i. 352;
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421, 427;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
composition and history of, i. 418, 436, 447, 453, ii. 3 n., 510;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 387, 389, 392, 408, ii. 13, 18, 32, 44, 51, 64, 71;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 219, 221, 229, 230, 231, 239, 253, 268;
in literary history, iii. 56, 70, 154, 156, 186, 189–191, 197, 199, 200, 216 ff, 233, 270;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 291, 330;
plan of, incompleteness of, iii. 431–436, 439.
(See *Prologue*, *The Knight's tale*, etc.)
Cantuaria, Thomas,
metrical prayer ascribed to, i. 450.

Capitolinus, Julius,
ii. 405.
Carew, Richard,
iii. 174.
Carter, Miss,
her knowledge of Chaucer, iii. 262.
Cartwright, William,
praise of Chaucer, iii. 79;
imitations of Chaucer, iii. 116–118, 123.
Cary, H. F.,
notes to his translation of the *Divina Commedia*, cited, ii. 237, 239, 240, 243, 402.
*Casibus Virorum, De.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Cassiodorus,
ii. 388.
Catcott, Alexander Stopford,
modernization of the Court of Love, iii. 200.
Cato, Dionysius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 358–360, 388, 419;
*De Moribus*, ii. 358;
allusion, ii. 396.
*Cato Parvus*, The Distichs of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 361.
*Causa Dei, De.*
(See *Bradwardine.*)
Cave's Ecclesiastical Writers,
ii. 465.
Caxton, William,
his editions of Chaucer's poems, and references to, i. 139, 146, 242, 254, 263–265, 429, 435, ii. 161, iii. 33, 437;
F. Thynne's comments on his text of the Canterbury Tales, i. 268;
the Retractation printed by, i. 413, 447;
his praise of Chaucer, iii. 30;
allusions, ii. 359, iii. 22, 70.
C. B.,
in the Gentleman's Magazine, on Mason's Musæus, iii. 129.
Cecilia, The Life of Saint,
i. 412,
ii. 300, 321, 323, 324, 329, 486, 488.
(See *The Second Nun's tale.*)
*Cento Novelle Antiche*,
ii. 249.
'Certain,'
use of the word, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 90, 541.
'Certes,'
use of the word, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 89, 90, 540.
Cervantes,
allusion, iii. 243.
Ceyx and Alcyone,
its identity with the Death of Blanche, i. 21, 31, 32, 424, ii. 251, iii. 320;
named in the Man of Law's tale, i. 416;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421.
Chalmers, Alexander,
i. 181, 234.
Chalmers, George,
i. 322.
Changes of method, Chaucer's,
i. 381–385, 408–410, iii. 321, 335–339, 439, 440.
Character of Chaucer,
no direct information as to, i. 10;
the significance of the amount of his ransom discussed, i. 57, 58;
evidence of estimation from benefactions received, i. 64, 66;
versatility of talents and knowledge of affairs, i. 70 ff;
worst view of the Cecilia Chaumpaigne incident, i. 76, 80;
charge of inefficiency discussed, i. 82, 85;

a favorite of the court, i. 83;
alleged negligence in loss of copies of grants, i. 90;
depth and tenderness of feeling, i. 101;
man of the world, i. 113, 114;
practical and literary ability, i. 121–126;
the charge of betrayal of his associates groundless, i. 198–200, 481;
healthiness of his nature, i. 223;
his likeness to Horace, ii. 263, 264;
circumspection of his utterances, ii. 308, 515, 517, 522;
literary conscientiousness, ii. 413–415, iii. 420–429;
the religious side, ii. 458–536;
representative of Hellenic element in modern civilization, iii. 38;
fondness for display of his learning, iii. 321.
Charlemagne, Legendary cycle of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 303, 304.
Chartier, Alain,
the claim that Chaucer was an imitator of, i. 136, 146, iii. 406.
Chatterton, Thomas,
i. 173.
Chaucer, Agnes,
wife of John, i. 13, 60.
Chaucer, Alice, daughter of Thomas,
marriage of, i. 103, 153.
Chaucer, Elizabeth,
two of the name, i. 100.
Chaucer, John,
Geoffrey's father, i. 12;
citizen of London, i. 14;
unmarried in 1328, i. 51, 52;
abduction of, i. 53;
death of, i. 60;
seal of, i. 106 n.;
mention of, by Dart, i. 188.
Chaucer, Lewis,
son of Geoffrey, i. 100;
mention of, in the Astrolabe, i. 101;
in Godwin's life of Chaucer, i. 198.
Chaucer, Mary,
wife of Robert le, i. 13, 52.
Chaucer, Philippa,
pensions to, i. 63, 95;
Geoffrey's wife, i. 96–98.
Chaucer, Richard,
(1) step-father of John, i. 51, 52;
(2) vintner, i. 161.
Chaucer, Robert le,
father of John, i. 13.
Chaucer, Thomas,
appointed forester to the North Petherton Park, i. 87;
birth of, probable date of, i. 98;
the question of his relationship to Chaucer, i. 99, 102–112, 155, 198;
homes and haunts of, identified with Chaucer's, i. 153, 178.
Chaucer Society, The,
founded, i. 340;
work of, i. 340, 341, iii. 264;
manuscripts of the Legend of Good Women printed by, i. 371;
its publications, quoted, i. 59 n., 381;
cited, i. 308 n., ii. 3 n., 17 n., 51, 226, 384.
Chaucer's Ghost,
a plagiarism from Gower, iii. 118, 119.
Chaumpaigne, Cecilia, Case of,
i. 74–80.
Chesterfield, Earl of,
on the language of Chaucer and Spenser, iii. 137, 138.
Chettle, Henry,
iii. 69.
Chetwood, Dr. Knightley,
the seventeenth-century view of Chaucer, iii. 94.

Child, Prof. Francis James,
on the language of Chaucer, i. 335–339;
on the Romance of the Rose, ii. 9.
Children of Chaucer,
i. 100–112.
Choice Drollery,
imitation of Chaucer in, iii. 118.
Christian Fathers, The,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 288–300.
Chrysippus,
ii. 289, 290, 400.
Church and state,
Chaucer's sympathies in the conflict of, ii. 477–482;
his hostility to the church in his later work, ii. 517–522.
Church, Daniel,
reputed author of the distichs of *Cato Parvus*, ii. 361.
Cibber, Theophilus,
his Lives of the Poets cited, i. 190, iii. 193.
Cicero,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 265, 271–274, 276, 277, 388, iii. 411;
Dream of Scipio, ii. 180, 272, 276, 278, iii. 321, 428;
*De Amicitia*, ii. 272;
*De Divinatione*, ii. 272;
*De Republica*, ii. 277;
*De Oratore*, ii. 369 n.;
allusion, iii. 378.
Citherus,
i. 245.
Civil offices held by Chaucer,
i. 61, 71–74, 81–86.
*Civitate Dei, De.*
(See *Augustine, Saint.*)
*Claris Mulieribus, De.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Clarke, Charles Cowden,
spurious pieces defended by, i. 477;
on Chaucer's diction, ii. 446;
The Riches of Chaucer, iii. 269 ff;
allusion, iii. 214.
Claudian,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 254–258, 276, 419;
*De Raptu Proserpinæ*, ii. 255, 347, 382 n.;
Panegyric on the sixth consulship of the Emperor Honorius, ii. 257;
*Laus Serenæ*, ii. 257;
*In Rufinum*, ii. 255, 348.
Cleopatra, The Story of,
i. 417,
ii. 185, 288,
iii. 12.
Clerk of the king's works,
Chaucer appointed, i. 84, 85.
Clerk of Oxford's tale, The,
autobiographic material in, i. 67;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 241;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 403, ii. 21, 31, 129, 143;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 224, 225, 228 ff;
its reference to the Wife of Bath's tale, ii. 522;
modernizations of, iii. 190, 194, 213;
versification of, iii. 309;
Chaucer's critical spirit as shown in, iii. 340–344.
Cleveland, John,
reference to Chaucer, iii. 37.
Clough, Arthur Hugh,
on the morality of certain of Chaucer's poems, iii. 353, 363.
Cobb, Samuel,
his modernization of the Miller's tale, iii. 188, 190, 191.
Cobbler, Captain,
i. 464.

Cokayne, Sir Aston,
tribute to Chaucer, iii. 94;
on Chaucer's language, iii. 135.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor,
his theory of Chaucer's versification, i. 330;
metre of Christabel, i. 335;
his admiration for Chaucer, iii. 259;
allusion, i. 167.
Collation of manuscripts,
value of, i. 244, 260, 294;
extent of, by Thynne, i. 266, 267;
by Speght, i. 271, 272, 274, 275;
by Stow, i. 274;
by Urry, i. 284, 294;
by Morell, i. 295;
by Dr. Johnson, proposed, i. 298;
by Tyrwhitt, i. 301;
Wright's view, i. 321 ff;
G. Chalmers's, i. 322;
object of Chaucer Society to facilitate, i. 340, 341.
Collier, Jeremy,
his sketch of Chaucer's life, i. 159, 172.
Collier, John Payne,
error as to Spenser, i. 29;
his Early English Literature cited, i. 151;
denies genuineness of the Testament of Love, i. 204;
error as to Stow, i. 439 n.
Collinson's History of Somersetshire,
cited, i. 86 n.
Colman, George, the elder,
on Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 158, 159.
Comic author, Chaucer essentially a, a widely accepted view in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century,
iii. 93, 121, 238;
reason for, iii. 359, 360;
accepted by Matthew Arnold, iii. 362.
Commendation of Our Lady, A Ballade in (No. 26),
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Commission to repair highways,
Chaucer appointed one of, i. 37, 85.
Commonplace, Chaucer's freedom from the, iii. 327.
Comparison, the method of, Instances of misuse of,
ii. 238, 247, iii. 290–293.
Complaint, A Ballade of (No. 77),
added to the list of Chaucer's poems by Skeat, i. 453;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Confusion of times and places,
a necessity with Chaucer, iii. 381, 382.
Congreve, William,
i. 27.
Connoisseur, The,
cited, iii. 159.
'Consider well every circumstance' (No. 35),
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;
attributed to Lydgate, i. 456;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Consolation of Philosophy, Boethius's, Chaucer's translation of (No. 7),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
its prose, i. 205;
its translation of *apium*, i. 243;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412, ii. 266;
named in the Retractation, i. 413, ii. 266;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
number of copies existing, i. 429;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, ii. 21, 22, 30, 42, 132, 154;

illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 205;
its completeness, ii. 334.
(See *Boethius*.)
Constance of Castile,
i. 96.
Constantius Afer, medical writer,
ii. 393, 394.
Contemporaries, Chaucer's popularity with his,
iii. 10–15.
*Contemptu Mundi, De.*
(See *Innocent III.*)
Controllerships of Chaucer,
i. 72, 73, 82.
Cook's tale, The,
supposed recovery of the conclusion of, i. 446;
the Tale of Gamelin, i. 447;
incompleteness of, iii. 434.
Cooper, Elizabeth,
attempts to revive knowledge of the earlier writers, iii. 242, 243.
Corinne,
unknown author, ii. 402–405.
Corrupter of the language, The
charge that Chaucer was a,
ii. 438–453.
Cortez,
Keats's error as to, ii. 191.
Couplet, The rymed or heroic,
i. 376, iii. 136, 301, 304, 306, 307.
Court of Love, The (No. 60),
autobiographic material in, i. 28, 29, 164 ff;
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 441;
the question of its genuineness, i. 475, 480, 496–503, ii. 73, iii. 125;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Catcott's modernization of, iii. 200;
Sandras on, iii. 409.
Court of Venus,
i. 467.
Coventry, Sir William,
on Sir John Mennis, iii. 88.
Cowley, Abraham,
his failure to appreciate Chaucer, iii. 104.
allusions, i. 325, iii. 174.
Craft of Lovers, The (No. 47),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 439;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Craik, George Lillie,
ii. 204.
Cranmer, Thomas,
iii. 41.
Crassus,
Gower's error as to, ii. 190.
Credulity,
Chaucer's attitude towards, ii. 502, 503.
Critias,
Spenser's error as to, ii. 191.
Critical Review, The,
on Tyrwhitt's edition of the Canterbury Tales, i. 310.
Criticism of Chaucer,
iii. 80, 104–108, 283–295, 367.
Crœsus, The Story of,
ii. 219.
Cuckoo and the Nightingale, The (No. 27),
autobiographic material in, i. 177;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
the question of its genuineness, i. 480, 486–489, iii. 29;
not named in Lydgate's list, i. 488;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Wordsworth's modernization of, iii. 217.
*Cultu Feminarum, De.*
(See *Tertullian*.)
Curtius, Quintus,
ii. 353.

Dalrymple, Hugh,
on Chaucer, iii. 239.
Damasus,
ii. 388.

Dameray, Lantin de,
edition of the *Roman de la Rose*, ii. 5 n.
Daniel and his three companions,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 187.
Daniel, Samuel,
on diction of poetry, iii. 60;
on Chaucer's fame, iii. 72;
his attitude towards criticism, iii. 284.
Dante Alighieri,
Chaucer's alleged translation of, i. 420, 425, 426, ii. 236, 237;
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 236–248, iii. 411, 424;
*Divina Commedia*, iii. 237 ff;
allusions, i. 137, ii. 235, 401, iii. 205, 362.
'Dare I say,' 'Dare I tell,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 98, 548.
Dares Phrygius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 260, 279, 305 ff, 419, iii. 371.
Dart, John,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 12, 94 n., 161, 166, 169, 186–190, 290, 291;
denies the genuineness of the Plowman's Tale and Jack Upland, i. 471, 472;
modernizes the Complaint of the Black Knight, iii. 200;
his praise of Chaucer, iii. 258.
(See *Urry, John.*)
Davenant, Sir William,
i. 333.
Death of Blanche, The (No. 8),
autobiographic material in, i. 21, 26, 31, 32, 97, 177, 211, 360;
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
number of manuscripts of, i. 239, 262;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 241, 245, 255;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412;
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420, 424;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
not printed till 1532, i. 429;
entitled in first editions, The Dream of Chaucer, i. 442;
imitated in the so-called Chaucer's Dream, i. 482;
ballade sometimes appended to, i. 487;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 387, 394, 401, ii. 19, 22, 34, 52, 54, 62, 64, 68, 69, 85, 124, 129, 140, 141, 150, 154;
illustration from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 187;
its reference to Chaucer's love of books, ii. 198;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 212–215, 218, 251, 280, 302, 335, 363, iii. 398, 427;
Chaucer's lack of reverence as shown in, ii. 507;
opening of, imitated by Froissart, iii. 13;
Chaucer's literary art as seen in, ii. 105, iii. 306, 320, 371;
incompleteness of, iii. 431.
Death of Chaucer, Date of,
i. 94, 141, 149, 150.
Death-bed, Alleged composition of a poem by Chaucer on his, i. 363, 364.
*Decameron*.
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Decker, Thomas,
iii. 69.
Deguilleville, Guillaume de,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 207, 208;
*Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*, ii. 208, 432.

Denham, Sir John,
verses in praise of Chaucer, iii. 95, 98;
allusion, iii. 109.
Dennis, John,
on change in language, iii. 141.
*Deorum Imaginibus, De.*
(See *Albricus.*)
Deputy, Permanent, allowed to Chaucer,
i. 74.
Deschamps, Eustache,
his reference to married life, i. 114;
flower and leaf references, i. 492, iii. 409;
ballade to Chaucer, ii. 4, 217, iii. 14, 394, 423.
Devon's Issues of the Exchequer,
quoted, i. 70 n.;
cited, ii. 196, 325.
Dialect,
as a test of genuineness, i. 370–372, 385–388, ii. 34–56;
use of Midland, by Scotch poets, iii. 18.
Diana, the Temple of,
Chaucer's blunder as to, ii. 183.
Diction of the eighteenth century,
iii. 201, 202.
Dictys Cretensis,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 279, 307 ff.
Diderot,
his characterization of Shakspeare, iii. 248.
Dido, The Story of,
ii. 250, 508, iii. 22, 426.
Dido to Æneas, The Letter of,
i. 435, iii. 368.
Diplomatic missions given to Chaucer,
i. 66–71.
Disbelief,
want of reverence not evidence of, ii. 508.
(See *Scepticism.*)
*Dit de la Fontaine Amoreuse;*
*Dit du Lion;*
*Dit du Remède de Fortune.*
(See *Machault.*)
*Divinatione, De.*
(See *Cicero.*)
*Do* and *did*, Use of, as a test of genuineness,
i. 498–501, ii. 72–75.
Dobson, Austin,
letter to London Athenæum quoted, i. 80 n.
Doctor of Physic's Tale, The,
literary tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 84;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 219, 279 n., 281, 412;
commonplaced by Milton, iii. 76;
anachronism in, iii. 379.
*Doctrinale Minus.*
(See *Alanus de Insulis.*)
Donne, John,
i. 334, 383.
Donnington Castle,
i. 103, 178–180.
Doubtful works of Chaucer,
List of, as classed in this work, i. 503 n.
Douce, Francis,
on Guido da Colonna and Benoît de Sainte-More, ii. 311.
Douglas, Gawin,
references to Chaucer, i. 42, iii. 16, 17;
Sibbald on his versification, i. 329;
inaccuracy of his scholarship illustrated, ii. 190;
his imitation of Chaucer, iii. 19 ff.
Drake, Nathan,
his praise of Dunbar, iii. 16 n.
Drayton, Michael,
Polyolbion, ii. 171, 397;
on Chaucer and Gower, iii. 71, 221;

Goldsmith's remark about, iii. 113;
his attitude towards criticism, iii. 284.
Dream, The.
(See *Dream, Chaucer's.*)
Dream, Chaucer's, now called the Isle of Ladies (No. 62),
autobiographic material in, i. 28, 29, 31, 177, 211, 483;
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 442;
the question of its genuineness, i. 480, 482–486;
Sandras on, iii. 409.
Dream of Chaucer, The.
(See *The Death of Blanche.*)
Dream of Scipio, The.
(See *Cicero; Macrobius.*)
Drummond of Hawthornden, iii. 47.
Dryden, John,
his patent as poet-laureate, i. 174;
commendation of Rymer's statement, ii. 447;
belief in judicial astrology, ii. 497;
on Spenser's diction, iii. 65;
his remarks upon Chaucer, and their value, iii. 80, 99–110, 112, 114, 231-233, 238, 252, 256;
likeness of his fortunes and opinions to Chaucer's, iii. 110, 111;
his imitations of Chaucer, iii. 87, 113, 119;
his modernizations of, and references to, i. 281, 489, ii. 228, iii. 103, 113, 133, 154, 156, 158, 159–179, 185, 186, 189 ff, 195, 196, 204, 246;
on the obsoleteness of Chaucer's language, iii. 136;
allusions, i. 94, 167, 230, 333, 334, iii. 66, 96.
Dublin University Magazine,
on Chaucer's birthplace, i. 161.
Dunbar, William,
estimate of, by later Scotch critics, iii. 16;
his praise of Chaucer, iii. 17;
imitation of Chaucer, iii. 20, 21.
Duncombe, John,
Letters by Several Eminent Persons Deceased cited, iii. 361 n.
Dunkin, Rev. William,
modernizes Chaucer's characterization of the Parson, iii. 201.
Dunstan, Archbishop,
Chaucer's reference to, ii. 328, 329.

Earle, John,
on Chaucer's rank as a poet, iii. 3, 74.
Earlier English writers, revival of interest in,
iii. 113, 114, 236, 237, 241 ff, 263.
Eberhardus,
list of writers read in schools, in his *De Versificatione*, ii. 419, 420.
Ebert, Friedrich Adolf,
cited, ii. 371 n.
Eclympasteyre,
i. 245.
Editions of Chaucer's works, Number of,
iii. 33, 34, 255, 263, 264.
(For editions in detail, see *Table of Contents, chap. iii.*)
Education of Chaucer, Supposed places of,
Oxford, i. 133, 164, 167–170, ii. 171;
Cambridge, i. 164–167;
France, i. 171;
the Middle Temple, i. 172.
Edward II.,
the effort to canonize, ii. 325.
Edward III.,
his contribution to the ransom of Chaucer, i 57;
gifts to Chaucer, i. 61, 174;

allusions, i. 55, 72, 81, 116, 176, ii. 202.
Edward the Black Prince, i. 55, 62, 141, 176.
Edwards, Richard, his Palemon and Arcite, iii. 68.
Effort, Apparent absence of, in Chaucer, iii. 445.
Eight Goodly Questions with their Answers (No. 36), named in Thynne's list, i. 434; its genuineness denied, i. 478; classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Ellis, Alexander J., on *here* and *there*, ii. 17; on modernization of pronunciation of Chaucer, iii. 276.
Elwyn, Rev. Whitwell, on Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 161.
Emendation, Conjectural, i. 260, 261, 395, 396.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, on Chaucer as a plagiarist, iii. 394.
Emperor Octavian, Romance of, ii. 302.
English classics, Object of studying, primarily a literary one, iii. 279.
"English Ennius," Chaucer the, iii. 94.
"English Homer," Chaucer the, iii. 50, 94.
English language, Chaucer's most signal service to, ii. 454–458; change in, iii. 140–151.
Epicurus, iii. 452.
Epithet, Change of, in the seventeenth-century references to Chaucer, iii. 94.
Ercildoune, Thomas of, iii. 261.
Euclid, ii. 396.
Eutropius, ii. 386.
Evelyn, John, i. 179.
Evelyn, John, the younger, Chaucer's style facetious, iii. 93.
'Everichoon' (as final ryme), use of the word, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 91, 544.
'Every del' (as final ryme), use of the phrase, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 91, 543.
Evolution, ii. 530.
*Exhortatione Castitatis, De.* (See *Tertullian.*)

Fables, Ancient and Modern (Dryden's), iii. 103, 231.
Fabliaux, Chaucer's alleged indebtedness to, in the Reeve's tale, ii. 216, 217, iii. 413, 414.
Fabricius, Johann Albert, *Bibliotheca* cited, ii. 290 n., 382 n., 388 n., 392 n., 393.
*Factis Dictisque Memorabilibus, De.* (See *Valerius Maximus.*)
Family relations of Chaucer, i. 95–115.
*Fasti.* (See *Ovid.*)
"Father Chaucer," i. 42.
Favorite authors of Chaucer and his time, ii. 416–420.
Fawkes and Woty's Poetical Calendar, iii. 139.

Fenton, Elijah,
on the Popean couplet and the language of Chaucer, iii. 136, 137;
allusions, iii. 144, 186.
Fielding, Henry,
Andrew-Tucker incident, i. 79;
contempt for long-drawn-out romances, iii. 331;
allusion, iii. 193.
*Filostrato, Il.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
"Fixing the language," iii. 145 ff.
'Flee from the press.'
(See *Good Counsel of Chaucer.*)
Fletcher, John,
iii. 68.
Flight and imprisonment of Chaucer,
Legend of, i. 180–200.
Florence of Worcester,
Story of Kenelm, ii. 326.
Florus,
Chaucer's possible knowledge of, and obligation to, ii. 186, 249, 288.
Flower and the Leaf, The (No. 63),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 442;
the question of its genuineness, i. 476, 480, 489–496, iii. 29;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Dryden's modernization of, iii. 175, 195, 200, 216;
Thurlow's modernization of, iii. 204, 208;
Powell's modernization of, iii. 217;
Sandras on, iii. 409.
Flower of Courtesy, The (No. 11),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
assigned by Stow to Lydgate, i. 456;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Floyd, William,
discoveries by, i. 86.
Forester to North Petherton Park, Chaucer appointed,
i. 86.
Former Age, The (No. 75),
discovered by Bradshaw and added to list of Chaucer's poems by Morris, i. 452;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
sources of, i. 361, 452, ii. 267;
special vocabulary of, ii. 29;
versification of, iii. 308.
Fortune.
(See *Visage without Painting, Ballade of.*)
Foster, Richard,
i. 74.
Fox, Charles James,
on Surrey's language, iii. 150.
Fox, John,
ascribes Jack Upland to Chaucer, i. 476;
on Chaucer as a Wyckliffite and Reformer, ii. 463–465, 476.
Franciscan-friar incident,
i. 172.
Franklin's tale, The,
tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 403, ii. 45 n., 50, 72, 85, 118, 127, 129, 131, 142, 144, 147;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 228, 260, 264, 271, 293, 370, 372, 390, 398;
Chaucer's opinions and methods as shown in, ii. 499, 515, 531;
R. Wharton's modernization of, iii. 205;
Horne's modernization of, iii. 217, 218;
Chaucer's literary art as seen in, iii. 326, 339, 367, 370, 379.
Frederick, Prince of Wales,
i. 296.
French words, Chaucer's alleged introduction of,
ii. 438–446.

French writers,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 206–223.
Friar's tale, The,
literary tests illustrated from, ii. 114, 143, 145, 149;
its reference to Dante and Virgil, ii. 236;
Markland's modernization of, iii. 190, 223;
Hunt's modernization of, iii. 217.
Froissart, Sir John,
on matters connected with Chaucer's career, i. 56, 69, 152;
mention of Retters, iii. 452;
Eclympasteyre, i. 245;
*Le Paradis d'Amour*, iii. 13;
allusion, i. 83.
Fuller, Dr. Thomas,
on events in Chaucer's life, i. 150, 162;
sketches of Chaucer in Church History and Worthies of England, i. 159;
on Verstegan's statement, ii. 441.
Furnivall, Dr. Frederick James,
facts discovered by, i. 13, 80 n.;
on Occleve's portrait of Chaucer, i. 50;
labors of, i. 118;
quoted, i. 119;
cited, i. 267 n.;
founder of Chaucer Society, i. 340;
reference to opinion of, i. 460 n.;
Temporary Preface cited, ii. 226 n.;
Trial Forewords to Minor Texts cited, ii. 432 n.;
Odd Texts of the Minor Poems, iii. 310;
recent discovery by, iii. 311 n.;
acknowledgment to, Introduction, xxvii.
Galen, medical writer,
ii. 393.
Gallicisms in Chaucer's undoubted writings and in Romance of the Rose,
ii. 51, 52, 446.
Gamelin, The Tale of (No. 66),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Urry, i. 289, 447;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 476;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Boyse's modernization of, iii. 190.
Gascoigne, George,
versification of Chaucer, i. 332, iii. 52;
on 'riding ryme,' iii. 305.
Gascoigne, Thomas,
i. 107 ff.
Gawain, Romance of,
ii. 196.
Gay, John,
his imitations of Chaucer, iii. 120, 125;
use of obsolete words, iii. 152;
comedy of the Wife of Bath, iii. 234.
Gedney, John,
succeeds Chaucer as clerk of the works, i. 85.
*Gemmis, De.*
(See *Marbodus.*)
*Genealogia Deorum, De.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Genilon,
ii. 304.
Gentilesse (No. 28),
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433, 439;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Gentleman's Magazine, The,
i. 176 n., 310, 311, iii. 129, 157, 194, 201.
Genuine works of Chaucer,
List of, as classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Geoffrey of Monmouth,
*Historia Britonum*, ii. 315-317.

Gesenius, Friedrich Wilhelm,
on Chaucer's language, i. 336.
*Gesta Romanorum*,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and supposed obligations to, ii. 317–320, 386 n., iii. 415.
'*Gestes*,'
Chaucer's criticism of the, iii. 330–332.
Gildon, Charles,
obsoleteness of Shakspeare's language, iii. 151.
Gilfillan, Rev. George,
edition of Canterbury Tales with modernized spelling, iii. 270, 271.
Gilman, Arthur,
edition of Chaucer's works cited, ii. 6 n., 21 n., 22 n., 148, 499 n.
Glenbervie, Lord,
i. 322.
Glover, Robert,
i. 99, 104, 106, 111, 154.
Glynn, Dr. Robert,
i. 173 n.
Godfray, Thomas,
i. 146, 265, 431, 436.
Godwin, William,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 18, 20, 23, 58, 96, 99, 118, 191–198;
his love-suit theory, i. 59, 97, 211–213;
on The Flower and the Leaf, i. 494.
'God wot,' 'God it wot,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 99, 549, 550.
'Go forth, king, rule thee by sapience' (No. 33),
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
assigned to Lydgate, i. 482;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Golden Legend, The,
ii. 320–322.
Goldsmith, Oliver,
his remark about Drayton, value of, iii. 113;
allusion, i. 27.
Good Counsel of Chaucer (No. 30),
its asserted composition on his death-bed, i. 362–364;
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
its reference to a passage in Boethius, ii. 120;
Harte's modernization of, iii. 200.
Goodly Ballade of Chaucer, A (No. 6),
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
the question of its genuineness, i. 479;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Gospel of St. Mark,
Chaucer's error in quotation of, ii. 186.
'Goth,'
as an epithet in the eighteenth century, iii. 250, 251.
Gower, John,
his reference to Chaucer, i. 43–48, 201, 358, 480, ii. 426, iii. 10, 336;
Chaucer leaves letter of attorney to, i. 70;
Leland's view of, i. 134–136, 143, 147–149, ii. 433;
his address to Henry IV., i. 431, 433, 438;
illustrations from his writings, of the tests of genuineness, i. 374, 375, 378, 381, 389, 390, 405, 408, 500, ii. 33, 45 n., 48 ff, 60 n., 64, 72, 77, 86, 100, 105 ff, 137, 138, 156, 540 ff;
of the inaccuracy of his scholarship, ii. 189, 190;
certain of the books and authors used or named by, ii. 210, 232, 269, 270, 320, 347, 392;

languages used by, ii. 454, 458;
opinions of, ii. 468, 476, 501;
in literary history, iii. 31, 32, 60, 66, 67, 70, 71, 119;
Chaucer's supposed criticism of, iii. 354;
his literary art, iii. 301, 378, 417;
allusions, i. 83, 91, 280, 359, 360, 491, ii. 170.
Grammar as a test of genuineness,
i. 369, 370, 380, 399–406, 498–501, ii. 65–77, 117, 118.
Grammatical ryming tests,
i. 375, 376, 399–406, ii. 65–72.
Granson or Gransoun, Sir Otes de,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, i. 40, 41, ii. 207, iii. 423, 450;
R. Bell's error as to, iii. 220.
Gray, Thomas,
on versification of Chaucer, i. 300;
on Lydgate, iii. 26;
an anachronism of, iii. 387;
allusions, i. 167, ii. 448, iii. 126, 239.
Gray, William,
date of Chaucer's birth, i. 17 n.
Greek,
Chaucer's ignorance of, ii. 192, 193, 387.
Gregory, Saint,
ii. 388.
Griselda, The Patient,
ii. 231, iii. 340–344.
(See *The Clerk of Oxford's tale*.)
Grosart's Works of Spenser,
cited, iii. 59 n.
Grosvenor, Mr.,
his modernization of the Summoner's tale, iii. 190, 191.
Grosvenor, Sir Robert,
controversy of, with Sir Richard le Scrope, i. 18, 188.
Gualtier de Lille,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 352–355, 419;
*Alexandris, sive Gesta Alexandri Magni*, ii. 353, 412 n.
Guido da Colonna,
Latin translation of Benoît's *Roman de Troye*, i. 303, 304, ii. 309 ff, iii. 394.
Guiot de Provins,
his *Bible*, ii. 222, 223.
Guy, Sir, romance of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 201.

Hadrian, Emperor,
interview with the philosopher Secundus, ii. 379, 380.
Hales, John Wesley,
i. 74 n., 108 n.
Halsam,
i. 451.
Hamilton, Walter,
i. 175.
Hampole, Richard Rolle de,
Prick of Conscience, i. 48, 49, 334. ii. 331.
Harrington, James,
ii. 444.
Harrison, William,
condemns modernization of Chaucer, iii. 106, 109, 258.
Harte, Walter,
on change in language, iii. 144, 145;
modernizes 'Flee from the press,' iii. 200;
allusion, iii. 186.
Harvey, Gabriel,
iii. 58.
Haughton, William,
one of the writers of the play of Patient Grissill, iii. 69.
Haweis, Mrs. H. R.,
i. 105 n., 106 n.
Hawes, Stephen,
praise of Lydgate, iii. 32;
Pastime of Pleasure, metre of, iii. 305.

Hawkins's Life of Johnson,
cited, i. 299 n.
Hawkwood, Sir John,
Chaucer's mission to, i. 70.
Hearne, Thomas,
on parentage of Chaucer, i. 161;
on editions of Chaucer, i. 282, iii. 242;
on Urry's plan, i. 289, 293, 294;
on language of Chaucer, ii. 441;
allusion, iii. 151.
Hebraic element in modern civilization,
The Puritans representatives of, iii. 38.
Hellenic element in modern civilization,
Chaucer as representative of, iii. 38.
Heloise,
ii. 289, 290.
Henry IV.
(See *Henry of Lancaster.*)
Henry V.,
holograph letter of, to Henry IV., i. 105;
Campsall text of Troilus and Cressida made for, i. 240, 341.
Henry VIII.,
commission of, to Leland, i. 142;
Tuke's dedicatory epistle to, i. 266, ii. 169;
exempts works of Chaucer and Gower from operation of Act of Parliament, ii. 476;
as a Reformer, iii. 39.
Henry of Lancaster (Henry IV.),
Gower's reference to, i. 45 ff;
counsellor to Richard II., i. 84;
his friendliness to Chaucer, i. 89, 90, 141;
the Knight a possible portrait of, i. 91 ff;
allusion, i. 110.
Henryson, Robert,
his Testament of Cressida, i. 460, 474, iii. 20;
admiration for Chaucer, iii. 16.
Henslowe, Philip, Diary of,
cited, iii. 68.
Hercules, The Story of,
ii. 184.
*Here* and *there*, Ryming of,
as a test of genuineness, ii. 17–19.
Heredity, The doctrine of,
ii. 529.
Hermes Trismegistus,
ii. 392.
Heroic verse,
iii. 301–304, 306.
(See *Couplet.*)
Hertzberg, Wilhelm,
denies genuineness of the Testament of Love, i. 200–204.
Heyrouns,
vintners, i. 13, 14.
Heywood, John,
indebtedness to Chaucer, iii. 69.
Hindley, Rev. J. H.,
iii. 81.
Hippisley's
Chapters on Early English Literature cited, iii. 66, 275.
Hippocrates, medical writer,
ii. 393.
*Historia Britonum.*
(See *Geoffrey of Monmouth.*)
*Historia Lombardica.*
(See *Legenda Aurea.*)
*Historia Miscella,*
Chaucer's possible knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 385, 386.
*Historia Scholastica.*
(See *Peter Comestor.*)
Historical novel, and truth of fact,
iii. 389.
History, Literary, Chaucer in,
(See *Table of Contents, chap. vii.*)

Homer,
Chaucer's ignorance of, in the original, ii. 193, 258;
mention of, in connection with the Trojan Legend, i. 304, ii. 305, 308, 314;
allusions, i. 137, ii. 293, 354, 429, iii. 28, 42, 91, 157, 159, 231, 362.
Homes of Chaucer, Known:
household of Prince Lionel, i. 54, ii. 47, 76;
dwelling-house at Aldgate, i. 73;
tenement in Westminster, i. 93;
Homes of Chaucer, Supposed:
John Chaucer's house in Thames Street, i. 14;
Woodstock, i. 103, 141, 175–177;
Donnington Castle, i. 103, 178–180;
New Elme, i. 102, 178;
at confluence of the Thame and the Isis, i. 178.
*Honor* without the *u*,
iii. 266.
Horace,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 261–264;
Poetic Art, ii. 261, 262;
Epistle to Lollius, ii. 409, 410;
allusions, iii. 26, 102, 235, 441.
Horn Childe, romance of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 201.
Horne, Richard Hengist,
edits the last of the modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 217 ff.
Horner, Francis,
i. 194.
Horstmann, Carl,
edition of The Early South-English Legendary cited, i. 499 n.
House, Chaucer's,
i. 175, 176.
House of Fame (No. 19),
autobiographic material in, i. 33, 34, 112, 215;
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
number of manuscripts of, i. 239, 262;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 245;
printed by Caxton, i. 265;
Bell's annotation of, i. 326;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412;
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
not named in Lydgate's list, i. 422;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 387, 389, 409, ii. 22, 30, 31, 34, 45 n., 49, 50, 71, 73, 114, 115, 127, 128, 132, 133, 140, 143, 145, 146, 149, 150, 152;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 180, 183, 184, 188, 205;
its reference to Chaucer's love of books, ii. 198;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 120, 214, 236, 238, 240, 242–248, 250, 252, 254, 255, 258, 279, 303, 308, 314, 316, 343, 350, 355, 358, 363, 381, 386, 390, 407, 410, iii. 397, 426;
praised by Hawes, iii. 32;
modernization of, by Pope, iii. 182, 200;
Warton on, iii. 248;
Chaucer's literary art and attitude towards criticism, as seen in, ii. 105, iii. 286–288, 306, 320, 368;
incompleteness of, iii. 431, 437, 438.
Howitt, Mary,
iii. 214.

Hughes, Mr. John,
offended, iii. 361.
Humorous Tales, The, in literary history,
iii. 358–363;
their excellence, iii. 363, 364.
Hunt, Leigh,
modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 208, 210–212;
joins in the last of the modernizations, iii. 214–229.
Hunter, Mr.,
on the seal of Chaucer, i. 106.
Hurd, Bishop,
i. 325, iii. 243.
Hyginus,
Chaucer's possible obligation to, ii. 287.
Hypermnestra, The Story of,
ii. 232.
Hypsypile, The Story of,
ii. 251, 313.

'I have a lady, whereso she be' (No. 55),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by F. Thynne, i. 457;
by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'I undertake,' 'I dare say,' 'I dare tell,' 'I guess,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 98, 99, 548, 549.
Imitations of Chaucer,
by Froissart, iii. 13;
by early Scotch poets, iii. 18–22;
by Spenser, iii. 45, 56;
by seventeenth-century writers, iii. 113–119;
by eighteenth-century writers, iii. 119–132, 183.
Imprisonment of Chaucer,
Legend of, i. 180–200.

'In the season of Feverere' (No. 52),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'In womanhead, as authors all write' (No. 59),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 441;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Incompleteness of Chaucer's works,
iii. 430–439.
Innocent III.,
*De Contemptu Mundi* cited, i. 49, ii. 366;
Chaucer's translations from, i. 412, 423, 426, 427, ii. 296, 329–334, 388.
Inspired-barbarian view of Chaucer,
iii. 248, 293–298, 375.
Invention,
sphere of, iii. 399–401;
not the necessary accompaniment of genius, iii. 402, 403;
of tales, iii. 414–416, 426.
*Ira, De.*
(See *Seneca.*)
Irrelevant learning,
Chaucer's intrusion of, iii. 364–375.
Irreverence of Chaucer's age,
ii. 505, 506.
Isabella, Queen Dowager,
Funeral of, i. 54.
Isidore,
ii. 388.
Isis, the Temple of,
Chaucer's blunder as to, ii. 183.
Isle of Ladies, The.
(See *Dream, Chaucer's.*)

'It cometh by kind of gentle blood' (No. 40),
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;
not mentioned by Tyrwhitt, i. 478;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'It falleth for a gentleman' (No. 39),
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;
not mentioned by Tyrwhitt, i. 478;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Italian writers,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 223–249.
Iulus,
Chaucer's mistake as to, ii. 184.
'Iwis,'
use of the word, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 90, 102, 539.

Jack Upland, The Tale of (No. 65),
added to list of Chaucer's works by Stow, i. 443;
the question of its genuineness, i. 188, 461 n., 476;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
favorably regarded by sixteenth-century reformers, ii. 462.
Jacob, Giles,
Lives of the English Poets cited, i. 159, 186.
Jacobus de Voragine,
author of the *Legenda Aurea*, ii. 320.
James I. of Scotland,
i. 500, iii. 18, 19, 304.
James, Francis,
his imitations of Chaucer, iii. 115, 116.
Jeffrey, Francis,
i. 194.
Jephson, Rev. John Mounteney,
i. 325.
Jerome, Saint,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, i. 307, 308 n., ii. 276, 290, 292-297, 388;
Treatise against Jovinian, ii. 292 ff, 337, 364, 366, 379, 416, 524, 528.
Jews,
Chaucer's attitude towards, as seen in the Prioress's tale, ii. 490.
J. H.,
Advertisement to the Reader, in reprint of 1687, iii. 92.
Joab,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 188.
John of Gaunt,
his grant to Chaucer, i. 63;
expedition to Spain, i. 81;
return to England, i. 92;
question of Chaucer's connection with, by marriage, i. 98, 111, 153;
payment by, in behalf of Elizabeth Chaucer, i. 100;
arms on Thomas Chaucer's tomb, i. 105;
Chaucer attached to party of, i. 189;
courtship and marriage of, i. 211;
protector of Wycliffe, ii. 478;
allusions, i. 21, 26, 54, 96, 483.
John of Northampton,
i. 189, 196.
John of Salisbury,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 362–364;
*Polycraticus*, ii. 359, 362 ff, 372.
Johnson, Samuel,
makes Chaucer a disciple of Gower, i. 148, 149;
edition of Chaucer contemplated by, i. 298, 299;
on Chaucer's introduction of French words, ii. 445;
his criticism of Dryden, iii. 103, 232;

on Pope's modernization of The House of Fame, iii. 184;
on Milton's anachronisms, iii. 386;
allusions, i. 7, 27, ii. 444, iii. 186, 248.
Joly, A.,
*Benoit de Sainte-More et Le Roman de Troie*, cited, i. 303, ii. 312.
Jonson, Ben,
first poet-laureate, i. 174;
on observance of unities of time and place, iii. 47;
his criticism of Spenser, iii. 61, 62, 64;
allusions, i. 334, iii. 117.
Joseph of Arimathea,
i. 132.
Josephus,
Chaucer's ignorance of, in the original, ii. 258, 387.
Jovius, Paulus,
i. 157.
Judas Maccabeus, story of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 303.
*Jugemen du Bon Roi de Behaigne.*
(See *Machault.*)
Junius, Francis,
unpublished notes on Chaucer, i. 281.
Juvenal,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 260, 261, 419;
allusion, iii. 102.

Keats, John,
i. 489, ii. 191.
Keightley, Thomas,
on invention of the Squire's tale, iii. 426.
Kele, Richard,
publisher, i. 269.
Kenelm, Legend of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 326–328.
Kinaston, Sir Francis,
on the authorship of The Testament of Cressida, i. 460;
his Latin translation of Troilus and Cressida, iii. 76–82, 84, 92, 104, 115, 117, 154;
opposed to modernization of Chaucer, iii. 105, 106.
Kissner, Alfons,
ii. 204.
Knight of the shire, Qualifications for,
i. 81.
Knighthood attributed to Chaucer,
i. 150–152, 163.
Knight's tale, The,
a paraphrase, i. 206;
illustrations from, of textual errors, i. 241, 279, 345;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412;
imitated in the Complaint of a Lover's Life, i. 481;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 376, 392, 403, ii. 34, 43, 45 n., 74, 84, 114 ff, 122, 124, 127 ff, 135, 139, 140, 142, 146 ff, 150, 151;
illustration from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 183;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 204, 219, 225 ff, 233, 239, 252, 381;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 481, 513, 516, 531;
in literary history, iii. 20 n., 67, 68, 248;
Dryden's modernization of, iii. 160, 162, 164–175, 189, 231;
Thurlow's modernization of, iii. 203, 208;
Horne's modernization of portions of, iii. 225;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 328, 355, 372, 374, 376, 377, 443.

Koeppel, Emil,
cited, ii. 271 n., 333 n., 384.
Kölbing
in *Englische Studien*, ii. 324 n.

*Lai du Trot*,
iii. 409.
Lamb, Charles,
on Godwin's conjecturing spirit, i. 195.
Lamech,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 188.
Lamentation of Mary Magdalen, The (No. 21),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
printed by Pynson, i. 435;
the question of its genuineness, i. 475, 478;
included in R. Bell's edition, i. 478;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Lampridius, Ælius,
ii. 406.
Lancelot de Lake, Romance of,
ii. 304, 316, 368, 497.
Landor, Walter Savage,
on Wordsworth, iii. 209;
declines to join in the new scheme of modernization of Chaucer, iii. 214, 215 221;
allusions, iii. 252, 264.
Langland, William,
three texts of Piers the Plowman, i. 236;
his versification and grammar, i. 333, 500, iii. 299;
character of his vocabulary, ii. 450 ff;
attachment to the established faith, ii. 468, 495;
his attitude towards alchemy, ii. 501;
diction and literary methods, iii. 60, 61, 440;
allusions, i. 116, iii. 261.
Language of Chaucer,
perils to the text from ignorance of, i. 248, 251–253;
Urry's views on, i. 285–288;
Morell's, i. 297, 298;
Johnson's, i. 299;
Gray's, i. 300;
Tyrwhitt's, i. 306;
Wright's, i. 316, 317–319;
Southey's, i. 330, 335;
Nott's, i. 332;
Prof. Child's examination of, i. 335–339;
as affected by Chaucer's residence in the North, ii. 46–49, 55, 56, 76;
its relations to the English language, ii. 430–458;
assumed obsoleteness of, iii. 78, 80, 134–140;
eighteenth-century misconceptions of, iii. 124;
naturalness of, iii. 440–443.
(See *Dialect*; *Grammar*; *Grammatical Rhyming Tests*; *Ryme*.)
Language, Chaucer's Relations to.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. vi.*)
Languages,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 192, 193, 202–206.
Laodamia,
i. 417,
ii. 258, 293.
Lapidarius of Marbodus,
ii. 343, 344.
Latham, R. G.,
on Lollius, ii. 409.
Latin authors,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249–288.
Latin translation, Kinaston's, of the Troilus and Cressida, iii. 76–82.
Latin translations,
value of, iii. 82–84.
Laureateship of Chaucer, Supposed,
i. 63, 152, 174, 175.
*Laus Serenæ*.
(See *Claudian*.)

"Learned Chaucer,"
ii. 171,
iii. 94.
Learning of Chaucer, The.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. v.*)
Learning, Signification of,
ii. 174–177.
*Leaulte Vault Richesse* (No. 74),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Morris, i. 451;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Lechler, Gotthard,
on Chaucer's attitude towards Wycliffe, ii. 461.
Leconfield, Lord,
i. 340.
Legend, The Chaucer.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. ii.*)
Legend of Good Women, The (No. 5),
autobiographic material in, i. 34, 35, 358, 488, 490, 491, 493, iii. 336;
mentioned by Leland, i. 139;
two prologues of, i. 250;
illustrations from, of textual errors, i. 260, 261, 338;
Scotch manuscript of, i. 371;
its list of Chaucer's works, i. 411, 412, 424, 475;
named in the Retractation, i. 413, 414;
named in the Man of Law's tale, i. 416–418;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 387, 403, 405, 408, ii. 23, 30, 73, 85, 95, 114, 115, 117, 124, 126, 129, 131, 134, 140 ff, 144, 145, 147 ff, 155;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 185, 187;
its reference to Chaucer's love of books and of nature, ii. 199;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 220, 231, 232, 236, 240, 250, 251, 257, 259, 276, 280, 288, 294, 297, 314, 375, 387, 400;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 502, 508, 510, 512;
prologue of, imitated by Douglas, iii. 21;
praised by Hawes, iii. 32;
Powell's modernization of, iii. 217;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 335–339, 369, 379, 403;
incompleteness of, iii. 431.
Legend of the Saints of Cupid, The,
identical with The Legend of Good Women, i. 417, 418.
*Legenda Aurea*,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 320–322.
Leicester, Earl of,
opposes the modernization of Chaucer, iii. 102, 105, 106;
induces Cowley to read Chaucer, iii. 104.
Leland, John,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 15, 131–149, 152, 153, 158, 160, 161, 164, 167, 171, 172, 177, 266 n., 267, ii. 169, 432, 463, iii. 35, 406;
his list of Chaucer's works, i. 456, 468.
L'Estrange, Rev. A. G. K.,
on wit and humor of Chaucer, iii. 290.
Letter of Cupid, The (No. 25),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
Bale's reference to, i. 149;
Oldys's reference to, i. 150 n.;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
assigned to Occleve, i. 457;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
literary merits of, iii. 24.

Leyden, John,
first to print Orison to the Holy Virgin, i. 449, 450.
Leyser, Polykarp,
*Historia Poetarum et Poematum Medii Ævi* cited, ii. 342 n.
Liberal, The,
iii. 211.
*Liber de Amore, &c.*,
*Liber Consolationis et Consilii.*
(See *Albertano da Brescia.*)
*Liber de Montibus, Sylvis, &c.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Lichfield, Bishop of,
ii. 326.
Life, Duration of, in the Middle Ages, i. 48, 49.
Life of Chaucer, The.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. i.*)
Lindner, F., in *Englische Studien*,
cited, ii. 11.
Lintot, Bernard,
i. 290 ff.
Lionel of Antwerp, Duke of Clarence,
Chaucer in the household of, i. 20, 21, 28 ff, 53, 86, ii. 48;
second marriage of, i. 157.
Lipscomb, Rev. William,
his modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 197–200, 202, 223.
Literary controversies in the sixteenth century as related to Chaucer, iii. 46–65.
Literary tests of genuineness as applied to Romance of the Rose, ii. 78–158;
general nature of the translation, ii. 78–86;
distinctive forms of expression common to Chaucer and the translator of the *Roman de la Rose*, ii. 86–121;
parallelisms identifying the two, ii. 121–153;
a use of synonyms common to the two, ii. 153–158.
Literature,
as a check upon linguistic change, iii. 149;
Chaucer's attitude towards, iii. 323–344.
Lives of the Saints,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 322–329;
a favorite kind of reading in the Middle Ages, ii. 322;
general character of, illustrated, ii. 487–489.
Livy,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 257, 265, 276, 278–284, 285;
story of Lucrece, ii. 279, 280;
story of Virginia, ii. 279, 281, 285;
not referred to by Vincent of Beauvais, ii. 378.
Lloyd, Robert,
on the rudeness of Chaucer's verse, iii. 257.
'Lo!'
frequency of its occurrence in Chaucer, ii. 90.
Lollardy, the new sect of,
Gower's denunciation of, ii. 468.
Lollius, unknown author,
ii. 225, 233, 234, 236, 405–411, 413–415, iii. 405.
London Magazine, The,
i. 310.
'Look well about, ye that lovers be' (No. 57),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
attributed to Lydgate, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Lorens, Frère,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 211, 212;
*La Somme de Vices et de Vertus*, ii. 211.
Lorris, Guillaume de,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 6, 7, 218, 220, iii. 411.

Louis XI. of France,
his belief in judicial astrology, ii. 497.
Love-poetry,
conventionality in expression of, i. 216, 217;
of the sixteenth century, i. 218–220;
Chaucer's shorter pieces of, i. 358–361, 364;
his manner in, i. 488.
Love-suit, Chaucer's supposed, i. 59, 60, 211–221.
Lover's Life, The Complaint of a.
(See *Black Knight, The Complaint of the.*)
Lowndes' Bibliographer's Manual,
i. 297.
Lucan,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 253, 254, 255, 258, 274, 419;
*Pharsalia*, ii. 253, 254.
allusions, ii. 256, 354.
Lucilius,
allusion, iii. 102.
Lucretia, The Story of,
i. 261,
ii. 187, 251, 257, 279, 293, 297,
iii. 12, 379.
Lucretius,
Chaucer's probable ignorance of, iii. 405.
Lybeaus Disconus, Romance of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 201.
Lycurgus,
Gower's error as to, ii. 190.
Lydgate, John,
his mention of Thomas Chaucer, i. 109;
list of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 201, 358, 419–422, 423, 425, 429, 488, ii. 4, 243, 510;
poems of, included in some editions of Chaucer's works, i. 438, 441, 445, 447, 448;
poems in Chaucer's works assigned to, i. 451, 456, 474, 475, 481, 482, 485;
his grammar and versification, i. 500, iii. 304;
his translation of Boccaccio's Fall of Princes, ii. 159, iii. 394;
inaccuracy of his learning illustrated, ii. 190;
Sandras's statement concerning, ii. 234;
his mention of 'Trophe,' ii. 408;
on Chaucer and the language, ii. 432;
in literary history of Chaucer, iii. 11, 12, 23, 25–27, 28, 31;
diction of, iii. 60, 61;
allusions, ii. 361, iii. 394.
Lyndesay, Sir David,
praise of Chaucer, iii. 16.
Lynne, Nicholas, mathematician,
i. 134, 145,
ii. 399.

Macer, Æmilius,
iii. 378.
Machault, Guillaume de,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, i. 423, ii. 212–215;
*Dit du Lion*, i. 423, ii. 214;
*Dit du Remède de Fortune*, ii. 213;
*Dit de la Fontaine Amoreuse*, ii. 213, 214;
*Jugemen du Bon Roi de Behaigne*, ii. 213;
Sandras's view of Chaucer's indebtedness to, iii. 409 ff.
Macrobius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 180, 249, 265, 272, 277, 278;
*Commentarius ex Cicerone in Somnium Scipionis*, ii. 277.
Magdalene, Mary, Homily upon.
(See *Origen.*)

Mai, Angelo,
ii. 277.
Malone, Edmund,
his Life of Dryden cited, ii. 497 n., iii. 87 n., 101, 159;
on the diction of Spenser, iii. 64, 65.
Man of Law's tale, The,
autobiographic material in, i. 21, 31;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 278, 279;
its list of Chaucer's works, i. 416–418, 424;
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 403, ii. 21, 54, 72, 114, 118, 129, 145, 147, 148;
books and authors used or named in, i. 426, 427, ii. 210, 254, 268, 318, 319, 321, 331, 385, 394 n., 396, 414;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 485, 489, 491, 498;
Brooke's modernization of, iii. 190, 194;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 354;
its want of relation to narrator, iii. 436.
Manciple's tale, The,
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, ii. 30, 62, 85, 115 n., 129, 130, 145, 148, 149, 155;
illustration from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 421;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 219, 261, 269, 359, 367;
Wordsworth's modernization of, iii. 210, 227;
Hunt's modernization of, iii. 217.
Mann, Sir Horace,
iii. 152.
*Mansor Aphorison*,
ii. 415.
Manuscript,
perils of transmission by, i. 228–238, 357;
test of genuineness, and record of authorities often furnished by, i. 368.
Manuscripts of Chaucer's works,
age, number, and value of, i. 239, 240, 262, 340;
errors of, i. 241–247, 251–253;
variations of, due to Chaucer himself, i. 248, 250;
alterations of the text in, by scribes, i. 253–258;
trustworthiness of some, i. 259;
Thynne's search for, i. 266, 267;
Campsall MS., i. 240, 340;
Caxton MSS., i. 242, 263;
"Examinatur Chaucer" MS., i. 266;
Cambridge, i. 257 n., 308, 340, 399, 403;
Ellesmere, i. 278, 308 n., 324, 340, ii. 45 n., 412 n., 414, 415;
Hengwrt, i. 308 n., 340, ii. 412 n., 414;
Harleian, i. 257, 308 n., 315, 316, 318, 320, 322 ff, 327, 328, 337, 338, 340, 398, 399, 403, 447, ii. 42;
Lansdowne, i. 323;
Petworth, i. 340, 403;
Oxford, i. 340;
British Museum, i. 340;
loss of, i. 357–359;
Scotch MS. of The Legend of Good Women, i. 371;
Romance of the Rose MS., ii. 10, 59;
Fairfax, ii. 73.
(See *Collation of Manuscripts*.)
Mapes, Walter,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 367–370;
*Valerius ad Rufinum de non Ducenda Uxore*, ii. 368;
*De Nugis Curialium*, ii. 359 n., 369.
(See *Valery*.)

Marbodus,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 343, 344, 419;
*De Gemmis*, ii. 343.
March, Earl of,
appoints Chaucer forester to North Petherton Park, i. 86.
Marcia Catoun,
ii. 294.
Mari, John de,
commissioner, i. 66.
Marie of France,
ii. 215,
iii. 409.
Markland, Jeremiah,
his modernization of the Friar's tale, iii. 190, 191, 223.
Marlowe, Christopher,
the perfecter of blank verse, iii. 48;
allusion, iii. 44.
Marriage and married life of Chaucer,
i. 95–98, 112–115.
Mars, The Complaint of (No. 23).
Leland's mention of, i. 140;
termed Brooch of Vulcan in Lydgate's list, i. 421, 425;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 392, 404, ii. 148;
sources of, ii. 253, iii. 451;
R. Bell's modernization of, iii. 217;
versification of, iii. 308.
Marsh, George P.,
Origin and History of the English Language cited, ii. 9, 118;
on the language of Chaucer and Langland, ii. 451, 452;
comparison between reputations of Chaucer and Gower, iii. 66, 67.
Marshall, Rev. Edward,
i. 175 n.
Marsyas,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 183.
Marteau and Croissandeau,
edition of the *Roman de la Rose*, ii. 5 n., 9 n.
Martianus Capella,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 350, 355–358, 419;
*De Nuptiis Philologiæ et Mercurii*, ii. 356.
Mason, George,
edits some of Occleve's poems, iii. 24.
Mason, William,
Isis, an Elegy, i. 168;
his imitation of Chaucer, iii. 126–130;
Walpole's letter to, iii. 158.
*Matrimonio, De.*
(See *Seneca.*)
Medea, The Story of,
i. 418,
ii. 314.
Mediæval works and authors,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 301–386, 417 ff.
Medical literature,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 393–395.
*Megacosmos.*
(See *Bernardus Silvestris.*)
Meister, Ferdinand,
edition of *Dares Phrygius*, ii. 260.
*Melibee et de Dame Prudence, Le Livre de.*
(See *Meung, Jean de.*)
Melibeus, The tale of,
its prose, i. 205;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 319, 321;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 23, 149, 155;
books and authors used or named in, i. 321, ii. 210, 384, 388;

Lipscomb's modernization of, iii. 198.
Mena, Juan de,
Chaucer claimed to be an imitator of, iii. 406.
Mennis, Sir John,
admiration for Chaucer, iii. 85, 87, 88;
imitations of Chaucer, iii. 118.
Méon, Dominique Martin,
edition of the *Roman de la Rose*, ii. 5 n., 9 n., 221 n.
Merchant's tale, The,
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 114 n., 130, 132, 140, 142, 143, 144 ff;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 218, 228, 255, 270, 271, 295, 318, 319, 356, 360, 366, 374, 384, 393;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 509, 522;
commonplaced by Milton, iii. 76;
Pope's modernization of, iii. 179, 180, 185;
the question of morality in, iii. 357;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 380;
lack of revision shown in, iii. 435.
Merciless Beauty (No. 69),
first printed by Percy, and added to list of Chaucer's poems by R. Bell, i. 449;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Meres, Francis,
Palladis Tamia cited, iii. 42, 50.
"Merry" Chaucer,
iii. 360.
Messahala, Arabian astronomer,
Chaucer's obligations to, ii. 397, 398.
*Metamorphoses*.
(See *Ovid*.)
Meung, Jean de,
*Roman de la Rose* (his part in), ii. 6, 7, 220, 221, 252, 285, 363;
*Le Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence*, translation by, ii. 211;
*Le Testament de*, ii. 221;
*Les Remonstrances*, etc., ii. 221.
Michel, Dan, of Northgate,
his *Ayenbite of Inwit*, ii. 211.
Michel, Francisque,
edition of the *Roman de la Rose*, ii. 5 n., 9 n., 151 n., 219 n., 220 n., 282 n., 285 n., 393 n.
*Microcosmos*.
(See *Bernardus Sylvestris*.)
Migne, Jacques Paul,
*Patrologia Latina*, ii. 336 n., 389 n.
Military life of Chaucer,
i. 21, 53–58, 62, ii. 478.
Miller's tale, The,
the Night-spell in, i. 351;
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 45 n., 115, 129, 130, 145;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 249, 361, 395;
Cobb's modernization of, iii. 188;
the question of morality in, iii. 198, 350, 351.
Milnes, Richard Monkton (Lord Houghton),
joins in the last of the modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 214.
Milton, John,
illustrations from facts in his life, i. 126, 215, 216;
illustrations from his writings and literary methods, i. 232, 246, 382–384;
his knowledge of and admiration for Chaucer, ii. 171, iii. 37, 75, 76;
alleged participation in Phillips's sketch of Chaucer, iii. 91;
Landor's comparison of, with Chaucer, iii. 215;
anachronisms of, iii. 386;

his indebtedness to others, iii. 422, 423;
allusions, i. 167, 471, iii. 127, 257, 259, 262.
Minor Poems, The.
Leland's mention of, i. 140;
Thynne's text of, i. 278;
R. Bell's, i. 325;
great number of, originally, i. 358–361, 422;
Furnivall's Odd Texts of, iii. 310;
Skeat's edition of, iii. 311 n.
Minot, Lawrence,
ii. 102.
Miracle Plays,
their irreverent spirit, ii. 506.
Mirror for Magistrates,
metre of, iii. 305,
its dolorous stories, iii. 332.
Mitford, Mary Russell,
her admiration for Chaucer, iii. 262.
Modernizations of Chaucer,
by Dryden, iii. 154–179;
by Pope, iii. 179–185;
by Betterton, Cobb, Ogle, and other eighteenth-century writers, iii. 185–200;
by nineteenth-century writers, iii. 202–229;
tendency of, iii. 240.
Money, Value of, in the fourteenth century,
i. 58. 64.
Monk's tale, The,
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 392, 404, 499 n., ii. 63, 84, 128, 138, 142, 145;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship. ii. 184, 186, 187;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 219, 224, 231 ff, 235, 236, 239, 254, 267. 274, 284, 285, 303, 324 ff, 408, 413;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 308, 333, 336;
incompleteness of, iii. 434.
Monstrelet,
iii. 453.
Montague, Charles,
in Addison's list of the greatest English poets, iii. 96.
Monthly Review, The,
i. 310.
Montrose, James Graham, Marquis of,
i. 363.
Moral Proverbs of Chaucer,
i. 435.
Morality, The question of,
in Chaucer's works, iii. 261, 344–364;
in eighteenth-century imitations of Chaucer, iii. 122.
Morell, Dr. Thomas,
his edition of the Prologue and Knight's tale, i. 294–298, 344, iii. 189, 240;
on Chaucer's versification, iii. 255.
Morley, Prof. Henry,
age of witnesses in the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy, i. 25.
Morning star of our literature,
Chaucer as the, iii. 98.
Morris, Dr. Richard,
his edition of Chaucer's works, i. 327, 466 n., ii. 6 n., 10, 11, 45 n.;
his additions to list of Chaucer's poems, i. 451;
his edition of Chaucer's Boethius, ii. 205 n.
Mother Hubbard's tale, Spenser's,
iii. 56.
'Mother of God and Virgin undefouled.'
(See *Orison to the Holy Virgin.*)
Mulcaster, Richard,
i. 172 n.

Musarum Deliciæ,
iii. 88, 118.

Naturalness of Chaucer,
iii. 259, 440–443.
Nepos, Cornelius,
alleged translation and commendation of the history of *Dares Phrygius*, ii. 306.
Nero, The Story of,
ii. 219, 284, 285.
'Never a del' (final ryme),
use of the phrase, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 91, 544.
New Elme,
i. 102, 178.
Nichols's Illustrations of Literary History,
quoted, i. 325.
Nicolas, Sir Nicholas Harris,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 23, 25, 50, 58, 63, 65, 70 n., 96, 99, 111, 118, 199, 200;
denies the autobiographic value of the Testament of Love, i. 201;
on the learning of Chaucer, ii. 172, 203, 204.
Nigellus Wereker,
Chaucer's knowledge of and obligations to, ii. 338–341;
*Speculum Stultorum*, ii. 338.
Night-spell, The,
in the Miller's tale, i. 351.
Nine Ladies Worthy, The (No. 50),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Notes and Queries,
cited, i. 450.
Nott, Dr. George Frederick,
his theory of Chaucer's versification, i. 331 ff.
*Nova Poetria*.
(See *Vinesauf*.)
Nude, The, in art,
iii. 348, 356, 358, 359.
*Nugis Curialium, De*.
(See *Mapes*.)
Numa Pompilius,
Gower's error as to, ii. 190.
Nun's Priest's tale, The,
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, i. 404, 499, ii. 22, 33, 50, 115, 128, 129 ff, 134, 140, 142, 147, 149;
books and authors used or named in, i. 303, ii. 215, 224 n., 266, 272, 275, 293, 297, 304, 326, 336, 338, 341, 342, 358, 360, 368, 372, 380, 383;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 497, 533;
Dryden's modernization of, iii. 162, 191;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 327, 374, 418.
*Nuptiis Philologiæ et Mercurii, De*.
(See *Martianus Capella*.)
Nut-Brown Maid, The ballad of the,
ii. 81,
iii. 29, 230.

Oak, Chaucer's,
i. 179, 180.
Obligations to other writers,
Chaucer's acknowledgment of his, iii. 420–429.
(See *Originality*.)
Occleve, Thomas,
his reference to Chaucer, i. 42;
portrait of Chaucer, i. 50, 95;
The Letter of Cupid, i. 149, 150, 457;
at Merton College, i. 170;
works of Chaucer attributed to, i. 450, 458;
his admiration for Chaucer, iii. 11, 23;
his literary claims, iii. 23–25, 28;
versification of, iii. 304.

Octosyllabic verse,
ii. 409,
iii. 301, 303, 306.
'Of their nature they greatly them delight' (No. 48),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Ogle, George,
scheme of modernization of Chaucer, iii. 189–191, 192, 193, 194, 197, 217;
his modernization of the Clerk of Oxford's tale, iii. 189, 194.
"Old Chaucer,"
iii. 93, 95.
Old English Miscellany,
cited, ii. 337 n.
"Old Grizzle,"
Chaucer styles himself, i. 39.
Oldfield, Mrs.,
iii. 139.
Oldys, William,
on date of Chaucer's death, i. 150;
assists in reviving interest in Chaucer, iii. 242.
'O merciful and O merciable" (No. 53),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'O mossy quince hanging by your stalk' (No. 56),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Origen,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 299, 300;
the spurious Homily upon Mary Magdalene, i. 423, ii. 300.
Originality, Chaucer's,
iii. 391–430.
Origines upon the Maudelayn,
Leland's error as to, i. 140;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412, 475;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 421, 423;
probable original of, ii. 300.
Orison to the Holy Virgin (No. 70),
printed by Leyden, and added by R. Bell to the list of Chaucer's poems, i. 449, 450;
classed in this work, i. 503 n.;
furnishes no special evidence as to religious belief, ii. 485;
authorship of, iii. 25.
Orosius, Paulus,
Chaucer's possible knowledge of, ii. 287.
Ortelius, Abraham,
ii. 440.
Orthography of Chaucer, The question of the modernization of, iii. 264–279.
*Ottava Rima*,
iii. 304, 308.
'Out of doute,' 'Out of drede,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 92, 544, 545, iii. 452.
Outspokenness of Chaucer and Shakspeare compared,
iii. 363.
Ovid,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 183, 214, 249, 250, 251, 252, 258, 266, 267, 280, 388, 416, 419, iii. 354, 368, 424, 426, 427;
*Metamorphoses*, ii. 183, 214, 246, 251, 287 n., 382;
*Heroides*, ii. 251;
*Fasti*, ii. 251, 281;
*Remedium Amoris*, ii. 251, 411 n.;
Art of Love, ii. 251, 289, 290;

Dryden's preference of Chaucer to, iii. 108;
allusions, ii. 256, 386, iii. 14, 157, 232.

Pageship of Chaucer, The question of,
i. 28, 30, 31, 53.
Palemon and Arcite,
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412.
(See *Knight's tale, The.*)
*Pallio, De.*
(See *Tertullian.*)
*Pamphilus de Amore,*
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 370–372, 388, 419;
attributed to Pamphilus Maurilianus, ii. 371 n.
Paphos,
Gower's error as to, ii. 190.
Parallel between Dryden and Chaucer, iii. 100.
Parallelisms between Chaucer's admitted works and the Romance of the Rose, ii. 121–153;
of remote resemblance, ii. 121–135;
of close resemblance, ii. 135–153.
'Pardee,'
use of the oath, as a test of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 91, 99, 543.
Pardoner and Tapster, The Adventures of the (No. 67),
added to list of Chaucer's works by Urry, i. 289, 448;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 476;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Pardoner's tale, The,
the literary tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 115, 119, 132, 143, 148, 149;
books and authors used or named in, i. 427, ii. 219, 270, 296, 333, 362, 373, 386, 394;
Lipscomb's modernization of, iii. 197;
Hunt's modernization of, iii. 212;
Mrs. Cooper prints prologue to, iii. 243;
its introduction of irrelevant learning, iii. 366.
Parentage of Chaucer,
facts as to, i. 12, 13;
fictions as to, i. 133, 150, 151, 161, 162.
Parker Society Publications,
cited, ii. 321 n., iii. 41 n.
Parkinson, John,
Herbal cited, ii. 50 n.
Parliament, Chaucer a member of,
i. 81, 82.
Parliament of Fowls, The (No. 10),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
autobiographic material in, i. 176, 177, 211;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 242, 243, 247;
printed by Caxton, i. 265;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412;
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
indebtedness to, of other poems, i. 456, 482, 487;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 398 n., 402, ii. 68, 69, 115, 128, 142, 144, 147, 149;
its reference to Chaucer's love of books, ii. 198;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 226, 240 ff, 256, 257, 268, 276, 278 n., 320, 345, iii. 428;
Chaucer's relations to religion as shown in, ii. 507;

Warton's imitation of a passage in, iii. 126;
Prior's allusion to, iii. 234;
abrupt ending of, iii. 320, 431;
Sandras on, iii. 411.
Parson's tale, The,
its prose, i. 205;
its place in the plan of the Canterbury tales, i. 436;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, ii. 21 ff, 141, 144, 145, 147, 148;
illustration from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 421;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 211, 299, 381, 388;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 499;
characterization of the Parson in its prologue, iii. 40;
Lipscomb's criticism of, iii. 198.
Pastime of Pleasure, Hawes's, character of, iii. 32.
Paternoster, The white, i. 351.
Paulus Diaconus,
reputed author of *Historia Miscella*, ii. 385.
Peacham, Henry,
his praise of Chaucer, iii. 110.
Pecuniary affairs of Chaucer,
releases his rights in Thames Street house, i. 12;
Henry de Wakefield advances him money, i. 62;
commutation of his daily pitcher of wine, i. 64;
leases the Aldgate dwelling, i. 73;
robbed, i. 84;
financial distress, i. 87–89;
revival of prosperity, i. 90;
leases a tenement in Westminster, i. 93.
(See *Civil Offices; Diplomatic Missions; Pensions, Grants, and Payments; Wardships.*)
*Pélerinage de la Vie Humaine.* (See *Deguilleville.*)
Penelope,
i. 417,
ii. 258, 293.
Pensions, grants, and payments to Chaucer,
i. 20, 28, 30, 61 ff, 70, 82, 87 ff, 94;
to Philippa Chaucer, i. 95 ff.
Pepys, Samuel,
account of the abduction of Miss Mallett, i. 78;
of his becoming acquainted with Chaucer's works, iii. 85, 86;
suggestion to Dryden, iii. 87, 177;
allusion, iii. 88.
Percival, romance of, Chaucer's, knowledge of, ii. 196, 201.
Percy, Bishop,
prints Merciless Beauty, i. 449;
his estimate of one of Dunbar's poems, iii. 20.
Percy, Sir Thomas,
commissioner, i. 69.
Percy Society, The,
i. 316, 340, iii. 32 n.
Persius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 264, 265, 271, 419;
allusion, iii. 102.
Peter Comestor,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and indebtedness to, ii. 372–375;
*Historia Scholastica*, ii. 373, 374.
Petit, Thomas,
publisher, i. 269.
Petrarch, Francis, —
his alleged meeting with Chaucer, i. 67, 68, 156, 157;
Leland's reference to, i. 136, 137;
at Prince Lionel's marriage, i. 157;
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 186;

Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 224, 225, 229 ff, 233, 235, 236, 408, 410, iii. 424;
indifference to his native tongue, ii. 455;
his interest in the story of Griselda, iii. 341, 343;
allusion, iii. 136.
Petrus Alphonsus,
ii. 388.
Petrus de Riga,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 334–336, 419;
*Aurora*, ii. 335.
Philip, Sir John,
first husband of Alice Chaucer, i. 103.
Philip III.,
ii. 211.
Philippa, attendant of the wife of Prince Lionel,
i. 29.
Philippa, Queen of England,
i. 96.
"Philistine,"
as an epithet in the nineteenth century, iii. 250, 251.
Phillips, Edward,
his *Theatrum Poetarum* cited, i. 159, 171, 174, iii. 91.
Phillips, John,
i, 290.
Philomela, The Story of,
ii. 251.
Phyllis, The Story of,
ii. 232.
*Physiologus*,
ii. 336, 337, 419.
*Physiologus de Naturis XII. Animalium*.
(See *Theobaldus*.)
Piaget, M. Arthur,
on Complaint of Venus, iii. 450, 451.
Pilgrim's tale, The,
confused with The Plowman's tale, i. 461 ff;
favorably regarded by sixteenth-century reformers, ii. 462.
Pindar,
ii. 404.
*Pindarus Thebanus*,
ii. 387.
Pinkerton, John,
his letter to John Nichols quoted, i. 325, 326;
scheme for improving the English tongue, iii. 139.
Pits, John,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 132, 133, 149–152, 154, 158, ii. 169, iii. 35, 36.
Pity, The Complaint to (No. 12),
Leland's mention of, i. 140;
its passion not real, i. 221;
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
allusion, iii. 310.
Plagiarism, the translator of the *Roman de la Rose* guilty of, if not Chaucer,
ii. 153, 158–160, 165, 166;
claimed as the prerogative of the man of genius, iii. 393;
the principle applied to Chaucer, iii. 393 ff;
the statements of Wright and Emerson, iii. 394.
Plagues, The, of Egypt,
Lydgate's error as to, ii. 190.
*Planctu Naturæ, De.*
(See *Alanus de Insulis*.)
Plato,
Chaucer's ignorance of, in the original, ii. 193, 387, 402;
Republic, ii. 278;
Banquet, ii. 402;
allusions, ii. 392, iii. 378.
Player, Fame of the, liable to perish,
iii. 139.
*Pleyndamour*, romance of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 201.

Pliny the elder,
Chaucer's possible knowledge of, ii. 287;
one of Marbodus's authorities, ii. 344.
Plot and story, Chaucer's progressive development in handling,
iii. 296, 316–322, 416–420.
Plowman's tale, The (No. 41),
confused with Langland's poem, i. 139, 173 n., iii. 109;
its genuineness denied by Dart, i. 188;
added to list of Chaucer's works in edition of 1542, i. 269, 436;
the question of its genuineness, i. 460–473, 475, ii. 466, 467, iii. 36;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
favorably regarded by the sixteenth-century reformers, ii. 462, 464, iii. 35, 75;
attributed to Chaucer by Dryden, iii. 108.
Poems, The, of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernized (1841),
the last of the modernizations, iii. 213–229.
Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry,
iii. 211 n.
Poet-laureate.
(See *Laureateship*.)
Poetry, Theory of improvement of, as held in the eighteenth century,
iii. 251, 252.
Poets, early, Characteristics of,
iii. 322, 323.
Poggio Bracciolini,
ii. 259.
Pole, John de la,
i. 103.
Pole, William de la,
i. 103, 141.
*Polycraticus*.
(See *John of Salisbury*.)
Pope, Alexander,
on Chaucer's introduction of Provençal words, ii. 447;
his imitations of Chaucer, iii. 120;
on change in language, iii. 141;
his ignorance of Early English, iii. 151;
his modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 158, 161, 179–185, 187, 190, 191, 198, 204, 238, 246, 361;
on Chaucer, iii. 234–237;
allusions, i. 6, 7, iii. 96, 100, 127, 147, 157, 159.
Popean couplet,
iii. 136, 303.
Popularity, Continuous, of great writers,
iii. 7–9;
Chaucer no exception, iii. 9, 10.
Powell, Thomas,
joins in the last of the modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 217.
Praise of Women, A (No. 18),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
the question of its genuineness, i. 475, 477;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Prayer to the Virgin Mary.
(See *A B C, Chaucer's*.)
Preston, Thomas,
prologue to his *Cambyses*, ii. 401.
Printing,
its effect on the preservation and determination of original text, i. 229, 230, 262.
Prior, Matthew,
imitations of Chaucer, iii. 120, 121, 124, 131, 188, 234;
imitations of Spenser, iii. 130, 152;
allusion, iii. 230.

Prioress's tale, The,
the tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 51;
sources of, ii. 324;
Chaucer's religious opinions as shown in, ii. 485, 490, 491;
Wordsworth's modernization of, iii. 209, 226.
Procerus,
i. 245.
Proletariat, Literary, of the eighteenth century,
iii. 193.
Prolixity, Chaucer's freedom from,
iii. 327–330.
Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,
autobiographic material in, i. 91, 93;
textual errors and variations illustrated from, i. 241, 249, 275;
its need of revised punctuation, i. 343;
its need of further annotation, i. 352;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 392, ii. 13, 28, 64, 98, 127 ff, 133, 135, 138, 140, 141, 143, 145, 146, 150, 537, 538;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 193, 219, 393;
references to characters in, ii. 184, 422, 456, 470, 471, 475, 516, 518, 528, iii. 37, 87, 333, 334;
references to character of the Parson, ii. 460, 461, 479;
of the Clerk of Oxford, ii. 422, 423;
of the Knight, i. 91 ff, ii. 480;
modernizations of, iii. 186, 189, 190, 216, 224, 226;
modernizations of the character of the Parson, iii. 177, 186, 200, 201;
the moral question as shown in, iii. 349.
Pronan, James,
commissioner, i. 66.
Pronunciation of Chaucer,
sixteenth-century errors as to, iii. 54–58;
on the question of conforming to the modern, iii. 271–277.
Proper names,
alteration of, i. 244, 246;
unknown, i. 245.
Prophecy, Chaucer's (No. 38),
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;
metrical prayer erroneously appended to, i. 450;
not specifically mentioned by Tyrwhitt, i. 478;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Prose-style of Chaucer,
i. 205–207;
compared with that of the Testament of Love, i. 207–210.
Prosperity (No. 73),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Morris, i. 451;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Protection, Letters of, issued to Chaucer,
i. 62, 69, 87, 88.
Prothero's Memoir of Henry Bradshaw,
ii. 413 n.
Provençal words,
Chaucer's alleged introduction of, ii. 446–449.
Proverb against Covetise (No. 43),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 439;
its genuineness accepted by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Proverb against Negligence (No. 44),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 439;
its genuineness accepted by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.

Proverbs of Chaucer,
i. 451.
Pseustis,
i. 245.
Ptolemy,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 186, 395–397;
*Syntaxis*, ii. 395;
*Tetrabiblos* (assigned to), ii. 398;
allusion, iii. 378.
Punctuation of Chaucer's text,
Necessity of a revision of, i. 342–346.
Puritans, Popularity of Chaucer with the,
ii. 461–463, 474, iii. 34–41.
Purse, Chaucer's Complaint to his (No. 34),
quoted, i. 89;
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;
assigned to Occleve, i. 458;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
Horne's modernization of, iii. 225.
Puttenham, George,
on the diction of poetry, iii. 60;
on Gower, iii. 71;
on 'riding ryme,' iii. 305;
allusion, iii. 66.
Pycard, Geoffrey,
i. 96.
Pycard, Philippa,
i. 96, 97.
Pynson, Richard,
his edition of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 264, 265, 413 n., 430, iii. 33;
Thynne denies genuineness of two pieces printed in, i. 435.

Quantity of Chaucer's verse,
i. 428, 444, 448, 455, 476, 503,
ii. 3, 6, 8,
iii. 450.
Quibbles, Verbal,
ii. 223,
iii. 319.
Quotations, Chaucer's,
character of, ii. 265, 418.

Raleigh, Sir Walter,
i. 363.
Rambeau, Dr. A.,
original of the House of Fame, ii. 243, 248.
*Raptu Proserpinæ, De.*
(See *Claudian.*)
Ravalière, M. de la,
ii. 212.
Razis, medical writer,
ii. 393.
Realism, Chaucer's,
iii. 390.
Recitation, Perils of publication by,
i. 227, 228.
Reeve's tale, The,
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 386, ii. 48 ff, 84, 115 n., 131;
books and authors used or named in, i. 315, 319, ii. 216, 228, 229, iii. 413, 414;
Chaucer's religious opinions as shown in, ii. 520;
Betterton's modernization of, iii. 186;
Horne's modernization of, iii. 217, 227;
morality of, iii. 198, 223, 351.
Refiner of the language, Chaucer as a,
ii. 431–437.
Reformers of the sixteenth century,
Chaucer's popularity with, ii. 461–465, 474, iii. 34–41.
Religion, Chaucer's relations to.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. vi.*)
Religious belief, Tendencies of, in Chaucer's time,
ii. 492–495.

Religious poems of Chaucer,
ii. 485–491.
*Remedium Amoris.*
(See *Ovid.*)
Remedy of Love, The (No. 22),
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
allusion to, by Addison, iii. 97.
*Remonstrances, Les, ou La Complaint de Nature à l'Alchymiste Errant.*
(See *Meung, Jean de.*)
*Renart, Roman de,*
Chaucer's knowledge of and obligations to, ii. 215–217, iii. 418.
*Republica, De.*
(See *Cicero.*)
Reputation of Chaucer,
vicissitudes in, iii. 4, 5;
among contemporaries, iii. 10–15;
in Scotland, iii. 15–18;
in fifteenth century, iii. 22 ff;
in sixteenth century, iii. 33 ff, 65 ff;
in seventeenth century, iii. 72 ff, 92 ff, 98 ff, 112 ff;
in eighteenth century, iii. 237 ff, 243 ff;
in Georgian period, iii. 258 ff;
at present, iii. 263.
Retractation, The,
its list of Chaucer's works, i. 412;
literary history and genuineness of, i. 413–415, 447, iii. 40.
Retters, The town of,
its geographical site, i. 56, 57, iii. 452, 453.
Return from Parnassus, The,
the imitation of Chaucer in, iii. 116;
styles Chaucer "merry," iii. 360.
Reverence, Chaucer's lack of,
ii. 506–509.
Rhetorical structure, as a test of genuineness,
i. 376, 377, 398, 399.
Richard II.,
Gower's reference to, i. 43, 45 ff;
favors, commissions, payments, and pension to Chaucer, i. 69, 70 n., 81, 89, 90, 141;
confirms pension of Philippa Chaucer, i. 95;
gives an appointment to Thomas Chaucer, i. 102, 110;
allusions, i. 83, 93, ii. 325, iii. 335.
'Riding ryme,'
iii. 305.
Riley, Henry Thomas,
i. 165.
Ritson, Joseph,
on loss of songs and lays of Chaucer, i. 360;
ascribes The World so Wide to Halsam, i. 451;
on Occleve, iii. 25;
on Lydgate, iii. 26.
Robbery of Chaucer by highwaymen,
i. 84.
Robert of Gloucester,
i. 499,
iii. 299.
Rochester, John Wilmot, Earl of,
i. 78.
Roet, Sir Payne,
Chaucer's assumed marriage to daughter of, i. 98, 99, 111, 154, 155.
Rogers, Prof. J. E. Thorold,
i. 64.
Roman centurion at Capernaum,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 188.
*Roman Gestes, The.*
(See *Gesta Romanorum.*)

*Roman de la Rose, Le,*
Gower's message to Chaucer suggested by, i. 480;
as original of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 3–166;
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 193, 206, 208, 212, 217–223, 248, 252, 281, 285, 347, 363, 393, 417, 526.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. iv. ii.; Lorris; Meung.*)
Romance of the Rose, The (No. 2),
alleged period of composition, i. 59;
mentioned by Leland, i. 139;
its punctuation, state of, i. 346;
named in Legend of Good Women, i. 411;
omitted in the Retractation, i. 414, 422;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420;
not printed till 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
length of, i. 444, ii. 7, 8;
quoted in the Pilgrim's tale, i. 465;
Chaucer's Dream apparently indebted to, i. 483;
genuineness of, i. 399, 428, 504, ii. 3–166, 200, 537–551;
a dual authorship of, indefensible, ii. 11–13;
objections to Chaucer's authorship of, controverted, ii. 17–77;
anonymous authorship of, not probable, ii. 79–81;
style of, identified with that of Chaucer's admitted works,
by general features, ii. 15, 16, 78–86;
by forms of expression common to both, ii. 86–121;
by parallelisms of idea and expression, ii. 121–153;
by a characteristic use of synonyms, ii. 153–158;
sources of, ii. 209, 222, 223;
commonplaced by Milton, iii. 76;
versification of, iii. 306;
its use of *withouten drede* or *out of drede*, a correction, iii. 452.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. iv. ii.*)
Romano, Julio,
iii. 385.
Ros, Sir Richard,
i. 474.
Roscommon, Earl of,
his Essay on Translated Verse cited, iii. 94;
in Addison's list of the greatest English poets, iii. 96.
Rossetti, William Michael,
comparison of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida* with Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, i. 341, ii. 205 n., 227, 228, 235, 241, 313.
Roundel,
iii. 312.
Rowe, Nicholas,
iii. 188.
*Rufinum, In.*
(See *Claudian.*)
Rye, Walter,
discoveries by, i. 14 n.;
quoted, i. 27.
Ryme,
as a test of genuineness, i. 372–376, 388–398, ii. 57–65, 75–77;
its superiority to alliterative verse, iii. 300.
Ryme Royal,
i. 333, 376,
iii. 195, 304–306.
Rymer, Thomas,
on Chaucer's indebtedness to the Provençal, ii. 446, 447;
A Short View of Tragedy quoted, ii. 447;
his *Fœdera* cited, i. 14 n., 63 n., 67 n., 72 n., 157 n., ii. 207 n.

Rymes, unusual,
the existence of, as a test of genuineness, i. 375, 398, ii. 59–65.
Ryming verse (of type used in romances and tales of adventure),
iii. 299, 300;
burlesqued in the Tale of Sir Thopas, iii. 300.

Sackville, Thomas,
introducer of blank verse into the drama, iii. 48.
Saint Peter, Sister of,
i. 351.
Samothes Gigas,
i. 132.
Samson and Delilah,
Chaucer's interpretation of the story of, ii. 187.
Sandras, E. G.,
on obligations of Froissart to Chaucer, i. 245, iii. 13;
on obligations of Chaucer to French writers, ii. 213, 214, 222;
on obligations of Chaucer to Italian writers, ii. 234, 243;
on Agathon and Zanzis, ii. 402, 411;
on Chaucer's originality, iii. 407–412.
Satire in the Middle Ages,
its favorite objects of attack, ii. 7, 263.
Savile, Sir Henry,
his edition of Bradwardine's *De Causa Dei*, ii. 382 n.
Scalby, John,
Chaucer assigns his pensions to, i. 83.
Scepticism,
prevalence of, in Chaucer's time, ii. 494, 495;
sceptical attitude of Chaucer's mind towards all subjects, ii. 495–505.
Schmitz, Leonhard,
his Life of Chaucer, in modernizations of 1841, iii. 217.
Scholarship of Chaucer,
accuracy of, ii. 177–189, 420–426.
Science and scientific literature,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 389–393.
Scogan, Henry,
Leland's mention of, i. 136;
his poem, i. 431, 433, iii. 10.
Scogan, Henry, Chaucer's Epistle to (No. 32),
autobiographic material in, i. 36–40, 87, 361, iii. 289;
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
its reference to Tullius, ii. 272.
Scotch writers, The early,
Chaucer's popularity with, iii. 15–18;
imitations of Chaucer by, iii. 18–22.
Scots Magazine, The,
i. 310.
Scott, Sir Walter,
his review of Godwin's Life of Chaucer, i. 194, 195;
on Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, ii. 228;
on Dryden's modernization of Chaucer, iii. 160, 165, 232;
character of his comments on Chaucer, iii. 259;
anachronisms of, iii. 389;
on invention, iii. 403;
allusion, i. 330.
Scrope, Sir Richard le,
his controversy with Sir Robert Grosvenor, i. 18, 19 n., 56, 57, 188, iii. 453.
Seal of Chaucer, Supposed,
i. 106, 107.
Second Nun's tale, The,
named in Legend of Good Women, i. 412;

illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 374, 398 n., 399, 404, ii. 45 n., 144;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 239, 321, 324, 329, 388;
Chaucer's religious opinions as shown in, ii. 485, 486–489, 491;
lack of revision shown in, iii. 435.
*Secreta Secretorum*,
ii. 392.
Selby, Walford Daking,
communications by, i. 60 n., 86 n., 88 n.;
quoted, i. 118.
Selden, John,
his praise of Chaucer's learning, ii. 171, 397, 398.
Self-consciousness of Chaucer,
iii. 295, 296, 323–325.
Seneca,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 265, 267–271, 388, iii. 452;
*De Brevitate Vitæ*, ii. 268;
*Ad Helviam Matrem de Consolatione*, ii. 269;
*De Vita Beata*, ii. 269;
*De Beneficiis*, ii. 270;
*Epistola lxxxiii.*, ii. 270;
*De Ira*, ii. 271, 320;
*De Matrimonio*, ii. 295;
*Epistola ii.*, iii. 452;
allusions, ii. 256, iii. 14.
Senior,
ii. 392.
Settle, Elkanah,
i. 334.
Shakspeare, William,
his literary art, i. 350, iii. 47, 48, 120, 294;
in literary history of Chaucer, iii. 67, 68;
modernization of his orthography and pronunciation, iii. 150, 268, 276, 277;
conventional comparison of, with Chaucer, iii. 290–293;
his outspokenness compared with Chaucer's, iii. 363, 364;
anachronisms of, iii. 384, 385;
his originality, iii. 401, 404;
allusions, i. 50, 126, 131, 189, 303, 310, ii. 223, 238, 247, iii. 4, 90, 223, 259, 262, 362.
Shepherd's Calendar, The,
Spenser's, iii. 42–44.
Shipman's tale, The,
the literary tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 84, 141, 147;
alleged source of, ii. 228;
lack of revision shown in, iii. 435.
Shirley, John,
on the original of Fortune, ii. 208;
on the genuineness of 'The longe nightes when every creature,' iii. 310.
'Shortly (for) to say,' 'Shortly (for) to tell,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 95, 96, 547.
Sibbald, James,
his theory of Chaucer's versification, i. 329, 330.
Sidney, Sir Philip,
on the unities of time and place, iii. 47;
on the diction of poetry, iii. 60;
on its gradual improvement, iii. 252.
Simeon Metaphrastes,
ii. 323.
Singer, Samuel Weller,
i. 450, 454.
Skeat, Prof. Walter William,
on a disputed reading, i. 279;
his preliminary essay in Bell's edition, i. 325;
on ryme of the preterite and past participle, i. 399, 400;
his edition of the Tale of Gamelin cited, i. 447 n.;

his additions to the list of Chaucer's poems, i. 452;
on the date of the Plowman's tale, i. 461 n.;
accepts the Ballade against Women Unconstant, i. 504;
the objections against the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose as stated by, examined, ii. 17–77;
on the originals of the Canterbury Tales, ii. 221, 232 n.;
on the original of the House of Fame, ii. 243;
on Avicenna, ii. 394 n.;
on the original of the Astrolabe, ii. 397;
his edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems, iii. 311 n.;
recent discovery by, iii. 449;
acknowledgment to, Introduction, xxvii.
Skelton, John,
his Philip Sparrow quoted, iii. 52;
allusion, iii. 61.
Skinner, Stephen,
on Chaucer as a corrupter of the language, ii. 442–444, 451;
his Etymological Dictionary cited, ii. 442.
Smith, Alexander,
on change in language, iii. 150;
on Dryden's and Pope's modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 161.
Smith, Rev. Dr. James,
iii. 88.
'So mote I thee,' 'So mote I go,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 101, 550, 551.
Soames, Sir William,
his translation of Boileau's *Art Poétique*, iii. 102.
Socrates,
Spenser's error as to, ii. 191;
the story of the wife of, ii. 294;
allusion, iii. 14.
Solinus,
his *Polyhistor*, ii. 287;
Marbodus's use of, as an authority, ii. 344.
Solomon,
Parables or Proverbs of, ii. 289, 290.
Solys, William de,
Chaucer's wardship of, i. 65.
Somer, John, mathematician,
i. 134, 145,
ii. 399.
'Sometime the world so steadfast was and stable' (No. 29),
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
*Somme de Vices et de Virius, La.*
(See *Lorens, Frère.*)
*Somnium Scipionis.*
(See *Cicero; Macrobius.*)
'Son of Priamus, gentle Paris of Troy' (No. 54),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'Sooth (for) to say, (The),' 'Sooth (for) to tell, (The),'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 94, 95, 102, 546, 547.
'Soothly (for) to say,' 'Soothly (for) to tell,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 94, 95, 546, 547.
Sophocles,
iii. 157.
Southey, Robert,
his review of Godwin's Life of Chaucer, i. 195;
on Chaucer's versification, i. 330, 333–335;

on the rudeness of the language in Chaucer's time, iii. 252;
his admiration for Chaucer, iii. 259.
*Speculum Majus.*
(See *Vincent of Beauvais.*)
*Speculum Stultorum.*
(See *Nigellus Wereker.*)
Speght, Thomas,
his life of Chaucer, and references to, i. 16, 99, 104, 154–158, 160 ff, 164, 169, 171, 172, 177, 179, 185, 188, ii. 171;
his editions of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 270–280, 296, 343, 441, 442, 444, 463, 470, 483, 490, ii. 170, 363, 401, 406, iii. 44, 51, 59, 92, 352, 405 n.
Spence, Joseph,
anecdotes of Pope, iii. 96, 234;
anecdotes of Addison, iii. 96.
Spenser, Edmund,
errors as to facts in his life, i. 27, 29;
his doubt as to the genuineness of the Plowman's tale, i. 470;
his diction, i. 502, ii. 136, iii. 137, 150;
inaccuracy of his learning, i. 247, ii. 191;
his admiration for Chaucer, iii. 42–46, 245;
his conclusion to the Squire's tale, iii. 45, 191;
versification of, iii. 54–57, 305;
Addison's characterization of, iii. 95;
imitations of, iii. 114, 119, 125, 130, 153, 257;
modernizations of, iii. 155;
Landor's comparison of, with Chaucer, iii. 214;
his attitude towards criticism, iii. 284;
allusions, i. 167, 310, iii. 76, 94, 128, 151, 259.
Spenserian stanza,
iii. 305.
Sprat, Thomas,
in Addison's list of the greatest English poets, iii. 96.
Spurious works of Chaucer, List of,
i. 504 n.
Squire's tale, The,
incompleteness of, i. 445, 446, iii. 434, 437;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, ii. 115, 127, 129, 138, 141;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 391;
Spenser's conclusion to, iii. 45;
Milton's allusion to, iii. 75;
Boyse's modernization of, iii. 190, 193, 195, 211;
Hunt's modernization of, iii. 211, 217;
Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 317 ff, 330, 426.
Stace, Geoffrey,
i. 51.
Stanzas and measures of complex and artificial character,
experiments, iii. 307–316.
Staplegate, Edmund,
Chaucer's wardship of, i. 65, 154.
Statius,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 245;
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 252, 253, 258, 262, 416, 419, iii. 424;
*Thebaid*, ii. 252, 253, 347, 403, 510, iii. 378;
*Achilleis*, ii. 252;
allusions, ii. 256, iii. 145, 249.
Staveren, Augustinus van,
his *Auctores Mythographi Latini* cited, ii. 382 n.
Steele, Richard,
Poetical Miscellany, iii. 361.

Storial Mirrour,
ii. 377.
(See *Vincent of Beauvais.*)
Stow, John,
Speght's indebtedness to, i. 154, 270;
his part in the edition of 1561, i. 269, 274, 296;
his additions to the list of Chaucer's poems, and references to, i. 437–445, 457, 475, 485, 490, 497, iii. 310;
attributes the Flower of Courtesy to Lydgate, i. 456;
on Chaucer's relations to the English language, ii. 438;
allusion, i. 470.
Strode, Ralph,
Leland's mention of, i. 135, 170.
Sturry, Sir Richard,
commissioner, i. 69.
Style, Chaucer's,
clearness of, i. 349, 350;
as a test of genuineness, i. 378–380, ii. 77, 78;
identified with that of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 78–160, 537–551;
in translations, ii. 209;
as affected by Italian writers, ii. 224;
directness of, iii. 170 ff, 326–330;
growth of, i. 409, 410, iii. 439, 440;
naturalness of, iii. 440–443.
Styx,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 182.
Subjects, choice of,
Chaucer's growth of taste in, iii. 330 ff.
Success, Chaucer's social and political,
i. 120.
Suetonius,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 265, 274, 278, 284–286.
Suidas,
ii. 404.
Summoner's tale, The,
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 403, ii. 42, 64, 114, 117, 119, 148;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 270, 328, 396;
Chaucer's religious opinions as shown in, ii. 520;
Gay's Answer to Prologue of, iii. 125;
Grosvenor's modernization of, iii. 190, 192.
Superstitions, common, Chaucer's attitude towards,
ii. 499, 500.
Surigon, Stephen,
i. 141, 142, 434, 441.
Surrey, Henry Howard, Earl of,
Nott's view of, i. 331;
blank verse introduced by, iii. 48;
his language, iii. 137, 150, 151;
allusion, i. 218.
Swift, Jonathan,
on settling the language, iii. 146 ff.
Swynford, Katharine, widow of Hugh,
i. 98, 104 ff, 111.
Swynford, Sir Hugh,
i. 98.
Swynford, Thomas,
i. 111.
Sylvester, Joshua,
i. 179 n.
Synonymous words, Characteristic use of,
common to Chaucer's admitted works and the Romance of the Rose, ii. 153–158.
*Syntaxis.*
(See *Ptolemy.*)

*Tables Tolletanes,*
ii. 398.
Tacitus,
not referred to by Vincent of Beauvais, ii. 378.

Talfourd, Sir Thomas Noon,
iii. 214.
Taste, Chaucer's change of,
iii. 335–339.
(See *Changes of Method, Chaucer's.*)
Tate, Nathan,
Poems by Several Hands, quoted, iii. 93.
Tempest, Shakspeare's,
its observance of the unities, iii. 48.
Temple Bar Magazine, The,
cited, iii. 225 n.
Temple of Glass, The,
as name of Chaucer's Dream, i. 483.
Ten Brink, Prof. Bernhard,
on Chaucer's versification, i. 373 n., 394, ii. 57 n.;
on Chaucer's originals, ii. 214, 227, 241, 243, 248;
on Lollius, ii. 409, 410;
acknowledgment to, Introduction, xxvii.
Ten Commandments of Love, The (No. 49),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
its genuineness denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Tennyson, Alfred,
i. 167,
ii. 370,
iii. 214.
Tertullian,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 290–292;
*De Pallio*, ii. 290;
*De Cultu Feminarum*, ii. 291;
*Ad Uxorem*, ii. 291;
*De Exhortatione Castitatis*, ii. 291;
*De Virginibus Velandis*, ii. 524.
Terza rima,
iii. 311.
*Teseide, La.*
(See *Boccaccio.*)
Testament of Cressida and her Complaint, The (No. 4),
Leland's mention of, i. 139;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
its genuineness denied by F. Thynne, i. 457;
assigned by Kinaston and Urry to Henryson, i. 460, iii. 20;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
*Testament de Jean de Mehung, Le.*
(See *Meung, Jean de.*)
Testament of Love, The (No. 20),
Gower's supposed reference to, i. 44, 480;
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
summary of, i. 180–185;
the legend founded upon, i. 188 ff. 454;
its spuriousness, i. 200–210;
its spuriousness pointed out by Hertzberg, i. 204;
named in Thynne's list, i. 432;
its genuineness not denied by Tyrwhitt, i. 480;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
its criticism of those who write in Latin and French, ii. 458;
its commendation of Chaucer, iii. 11.
Testimony, Personal and contemporary, as a test of genuineness,
i. 367, 368, 370, 380.
Tests of genuineness,
the first class, or absolute, i. 367–370, 380, 498–501;
the second class, or corroboratory, i. 370–410;
applied to the Romance of the Rose, ii. 17–160, 537–551.
*Tetrabiblos.*
(See *Ptolemy.*)
Teutonic speech, Verstegan's view of,
ii. 439–441.

Text of Chaucer, The.
(See *Table of Contents, chap. iii.*)
'The longe nightes when every creature' (No. 58),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 440;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
genuineness and versification of, iii. 310, 311.
'The more I go, the farther I am behind' (No. 72),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by R. Bell, i. 451;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
'The world so wide, the air so remuable' (No. 71),
ascribed by Ritson to Halsam, i. 451;
added to list of Chaucer's poems by R. Bell, i. 451;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
*Thebaid.*
(See *Statius.*)
Thebes and Greece,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 182.
Theobaldus,
*Physiologus de Naturis xii Animalium*, ii. 337, 419.
Theology, doctrinal,
Chaucer's interest in, ii. 531–535.
Theophrastus,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 289, 290, 364–367;
*Aureolus Theophrasti Liber de Nuptiis*, ii. 366, 379.
Thespis,
Gawin Douglas's error as to, ii. 190.
Thisbe, The Story of,
ii. 251.
Thomas, Timothy,
i. 291.
Thomas, William,
i. 186, 291.
Thompson, William,
imitations of Chaucer, iii. 125.
Thomson, James,
his use of obsolete words, iii. 153.
Thopas, The Tale of Sir,
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 388, ii. 13, 27, 28;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 49, 201, 302;
Z. A. Z.'s modernization of, iii. 217;
Bishop Hurd on, iii. 243;
versification of, iii. 300;
the *Gestes* satirized in, iii. 331;
incompleteness of, iii. 434.
Thurlow, Edward Hovel, second Lord,
modernizations of Chaucer, i. 489, iii. 203, 204, 206–208.
Thynne, Francis,
his Animadversions cited, i. 163, 267, 268, 272, 273, 436;
on the necessity of separating and rejecting works wrongly attributed to Chaucer, i. 457;
on the omission of the Pilgrim's tale from his father's edition, i. 462 ff;
on the original of the Knight's tale, ii. 204;
on the threatened prohibition of Chaucer's works, ii. 476;
on the versification of Chaucer, iii. 51.
Thynne, Sir John,
i. 463.
Thynne, William,
his editions of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 139, 146, 243, 265–270, 296, ii. 6 n., 10, 476, iii. 437;
the texts compared, i. 276 ff;
his list of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 430–437, 413, 444, 461, 462, 474, 481.
To the King's most Noble Grace (No. 37),
named in Thynne's list, i. 434;

included in R. Bell's edition, i. 478;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Todd, Henry John,
his Illustrations of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer cited, i. 272, ii. 172;
his edition of Spenser cited, iii. 65, 155.
Tomb of Darius,
ii. 353, 354.
Tonson, Jacob,
publishes Pope's first modernization of Chaucer, iii. 179;
publishes three volumes of the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer Modernized by Several Hands, iii. 190.
Tortula,
ii. 289.
Toy, Robert,
publisher, i. 269.
*Tractatus ad Laudem Gloriosæ Virginis Matris.*
(See *Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint.*)
Tragedies,
Chaucer's criticism of the, iii. 332–335.
Translator, Chaucer as a,
iii. 366.
Trapp, Joseph,
on Dryden's commendation of Chaucer, iii. 232.
Trivet, Nicolas,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 209, 210;
Anglo-Norman Chronicle, ii. 210.
Troilus and Cressida (No. 3),
Leland's mention of, i. 135, 139;
autobiographic material in, i. 227, 359;
date of Campsall text, i. 240;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 245, 254;
printed by Caxton, i. 265;
Chaucer Society texts of, i. 340, 341;
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 411;
named in the Retractation, i. 413;
named in Lydgate's list, i. 420;
named in Thynne's list, i. 431;
indebtedness of other poems to, i. 453, 482;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 374, 393, 394, 397, 398, 402, ii. 21 ff, 30 ff, 34, 45 n., 51, 54, 62, 63, 65, 71, 85, 95, 114 ff, 127, 128, 131, 132, 135, 139, 140, 142–150;
illustrations from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, i. 182, 205;
books and authors used or named in, i. 203, 333, ii. 225, 227, 228, 236, 240, 241, 252, 253, 258, 260, 261, 267, 287 n., 309, 312, 359, 406 ff, 410, 411, iii. 424, 425;
Chaucer's opinions as shown in, ii. 481, 498, 510, 514, 519, 532 n., 533;
its literary history, iii. 10, 32, 33, 67;
Kinaston's Latin translation of, iii. 76–82, 104, 154;
indebtedness to, of the imitation in the Return from Parnassus, iii. 116;
Wordsworth's modernization of a portion of, iii. 217;
extracts from, in Clarke's The Riches of Chaucer, iii. 269;
Chaucer's attitude towards criticism as shown in, iii. 285;
his literary art as shown in, iii. 319, 320, 328, 329, 369, 370, 373, 374;
anachronisms in, iii. 377 ff.

Trojan war, legendary cycle of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, i. 302–304, ii. 303, 305–317.
Trophe,
ii. 408, 411, 413, 415.
Trouvères,
Sandras's claim of Chaucer's indebtedness to the, iii. 407–412.
*Troye, Roman de.*
(See *Benoît de Sainte-More.*)
'Trust well,' 'trust me,' 'trusteth well,' 'trusteth me,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 99, 549.
Truth stranger than fiction, why, iii. 400.
Tuke, Sir Brian,
his Dedicatory Epistle to Thynne's edition of Chaucer, i. 139, 266–268.
Turner, Sharon,
i. 17 n.
Tyrwhitt, Thomas,
on events in Chaucer's life, i. 16, 96, 99, 170, 186, 190;
on editions of Chaucer other than his own, i. 263, 268, 288, 292, 297, 413 n., 460 n.;
his edition of the Canterbury Tales, i. 300–313, ii. 3 n., 311, iii. 139, 158, 219, 224, 254;
attacked by Wright, i. 315–321, iii. 394;
attacked by G. Chalmers, i. 322;
his text, i. 249, 250, 323, 324, 336, 344, 437, ii. 73;
his theory of Chaucer's versification, i. 328, 329, iii. 50;
Nott on, i. 332;
his list of words in Chaucer's works he could not define, i. 350;
works of Chaucer rejected or not mentioned by, i. 449, 464, 466, 473–479, ii. 466;
the question of the genuineness of certain works accepted by, i. 480–503, iii. 410;
on the texts of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 10;
on the learning of Chaucer, ii. 186, 204;
on originals
of lost works of Chaucer, i. 423, ii. 300;
of Man of Law's tale, ii. 210, 385;
of Death of Blanche, ii. 212;
of Nun's Priest's tale, ii. 215, 273;
of Reeve's tale, ii. 216;
of passages in Prologue, Knight's tale, and Manciple's tale, ii. 219;
of Monk's tale, ii. 219, 232 n., 233, 235;
of Doctor's tale, ii. 219;
of Miller's tale, ii. 249;
of Pardoner's tale, ii. 270;
of Wife of Bath's tale, ii. 290, 379, 396, 397;
of Merchant's tale, ii. 384;
of Canon's Yeoman's tale, ii. 392;
on the *Roman de Troye*, ii. 311;
on the Distichs of *Cato Parvus*, ii. 361;
on Agathon, ii. 401;
on Lollius, ii. 406;
on Zanzis, ii. 411;
on Zael, ii. 414;
on Chaucer's relations to the English language, ii. 445, 448 ff;
in the literary history of Chaucer, i. 455, iii. 130, 254–258.

Ugolino, The Story of,
ii. 239.
Universal Doctor, The title of,
ii. 179.

Universal Magazine, The,
on the Donnington Oak, i. 179 n.
Upton, John,
accepts the genuineness of the Plowman's tale, i. 472.
Urban VI.,
ii. 325.
Urry, John,
the life of Chaucer prefixed to his edition, and references to, i. 17, 99, 158, 159, 166, 169, 186–190;
his edition of Chaucer's works, and references to, i. 283–294, 413 n., 414, 435, 458, 460, ii. 6 n., 401, 406, iii. 81, 190;
his additions to the list of Chaucer's works, i. 446–448;
on Chaucer's versification, iii. 255;
on the morality of the Miller's tale, iii. 351.
*Uxorem, Ad.*
(See *Tertullian.*)

Valerius Flaccus,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 258–260;
*Argonautica*, ii. 259.
Valerius Maximus,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249, 257, 265, 273, 274–277;
*De Factis Dictisque Memorabilibus*, ii. 273.
*Valerius ad Rufinum, &c.*
(See *Mapes, Walter.*)
Valery,
ii. 289, 290, 367 ff.
(See *Mapes, Walter.*)
*Valettus, armiger, scutifer,*
i. 61.
Varro,
ii. 260.
"Venerable,"
epithet applied to Chaucer by Gawin Douglas, i. 42.
Venus,
Chaucer's error as to source of her surname of Cytherea, ii. 181.
Venus, The Complaint of (No. 24),
autobiographic material in, i. 40, 41;
mentioned by Leland, i. 140;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, i. 400, ii. 21;
a translation from Granson's poems, ii. 207, iii. 450, 451;
R. Bell's modernization of, iii. 217;
versification of, iii. 308, 309, 311, 312.
Verse.
(See *Alliterative verse; Heroic verse; Octosyllabic verse; Ryme Royal; Ryming verse; Stanzas and measures.*)
Versification of Chaucer,
references to, i. 285, 286, 290, 299, 300;
discussion of, i. 328–335;
perfection of, i. 347, 348;
its growth in freedom, i. 408–410, ii. 164, 165;
views of, as wanting in regularity, iii. 51–58, 109–112;
Tyrwhitt's vindication of, iii. 255–258;
result of conscious skill, iii. 295, 296;
its value, iii. 297, 298;
its originality, variety, and development, iii. 298–316.
*Versificatione, De.*
(See *Eberhardus.*)
Verstegan, Richard,
Chaucer as a corrupter of the English language, ii. 438–441, 451;
his Restitution of Decayed Intelligence cited, ii. 438.
Village without Painting.
(See *Visage without Painting.*)

Villon, Francis,
compared with Chaucer by Matthew Arnold, iii. 362.
Vincent of Beauvais,
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 375–381.
*Speculum Majus* or *Bibliotheca Mundi*, ii. 375 ff, 383.
Vinesauf, Geoffrey de,
Chaucer's mention of, ii. 224 n., 341, 342, 420;
*Nova Poetria*, ii. 341, 342.
Virelay,
iii. 312.
Virgil,
Chaucer compared with, i. 137;
mistakes of Chaucer in rendering, ii. 184, 205;
Gower's error as to, ii. 190;
Chaucer's knowledge of, and obligations to, ii. 249 ff, 258, 416, 419, iii. 321, 368, 424, 426;
allusions, i. 238, 242, ii. 352, 502, iii. 21, 22, 158, 231, 249.
Virginia, The Story of,
ii. 219, 279, 281, 285, 298, iii. 379.
*Virginibus Velandis, De.*
(See *Tertullian.*)
Visage without Painting, Ballade of (No. 31),
printed before 1532, i. 429;
named in Thynne's list, i. 433;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.;
the literary tests of genuineness illustrated from, ii. 150;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 208, 296.
Visconti, Bernardo, Lord of Milan,
Chaucer's mission to, i. 70.
Vitellio, Polish mathematician, ii. 391.
Vocabulary, Chaucer's,
as a test of genuineness, i. 377, 378, 398, 399, ii. 19–34, 49–51, 537, 538;
general character of, ii. 449–453.
Voltaire,
characterization of Shakspeare, iii. 248.
Volucraire,
alleged obligations of Chaucer to, iii. 411.

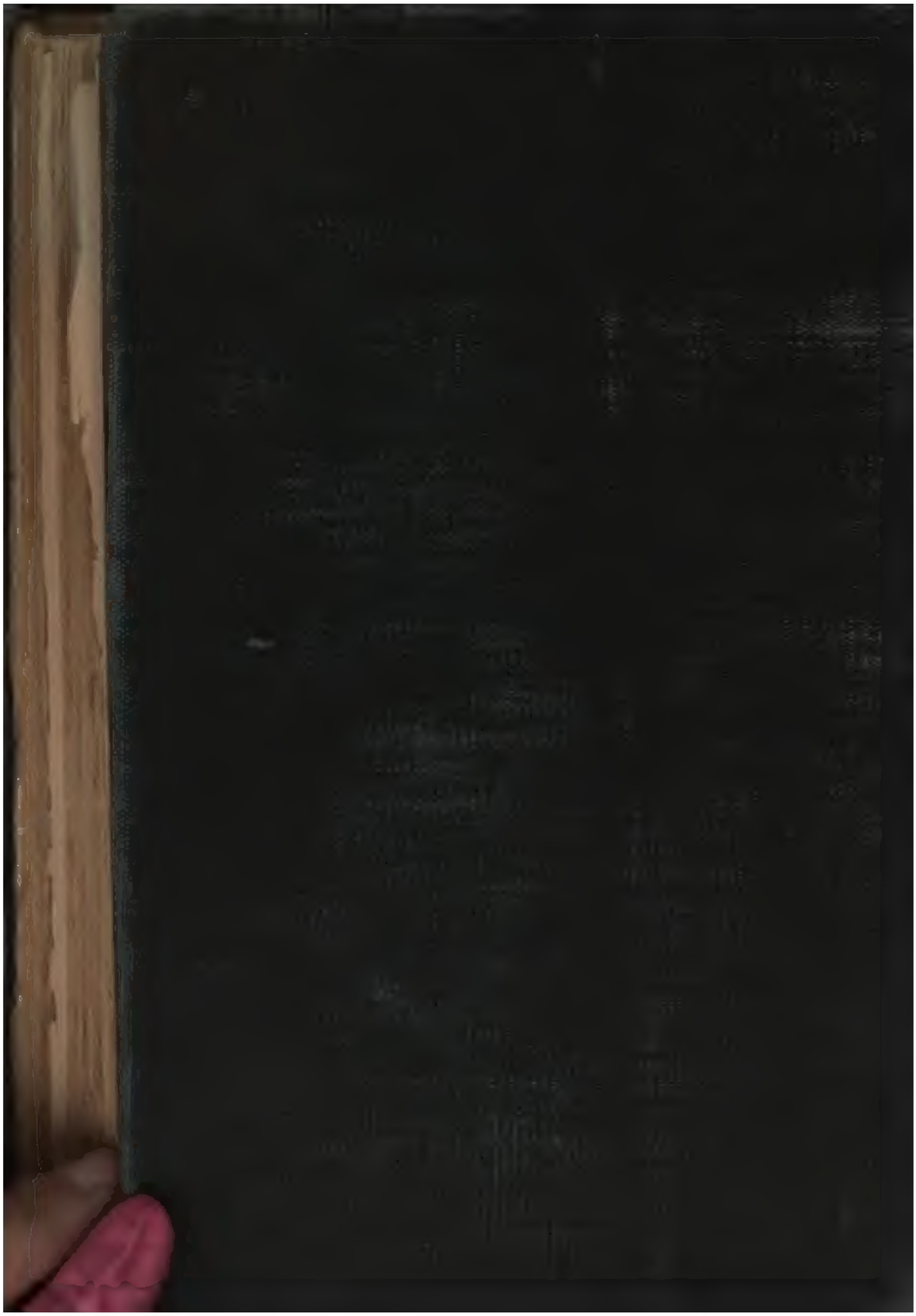
Wade and his Boat,
i. 351.
Wakefield, Henry de,
i. 62.
Waldron, Francis Godolphin,
iii. 81.
Waller, Edmund,
on the permanency of the classic tongues, iii. 83, 84, 140, 146;
on Chaucer's versification, iii. 111;
allusions, ii. 223, iii. 109, 147.
Walpole, Horace,
on enrichment of the language by Chaucer, ii. 445;
his ignorance of Early English, iii. 151;
on Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 158, 159;
his use of the term "Gothic," iii. 251.
Walsingham, Thomas of,
his *Historia Anglicana* cited, i. 91, 92.
Warburton, Bishop,
accepts genuineness of the Plowman's tale, i. 472;
on Chaucer's introduction of Provençal words, ii. 448, 449.
Ward, Prof. Adolphus William,
Chaucer's age and the Occleve portrait, i. 50.
Ward, Mr. Henry,
Chaucer's obligations to *La Teseide*, ii. 226.
Ward, Thomas Humphry,
his English Poets cited, iii. 362.
Wardships given to Chaucer,
i. 65, 154.

Warton, Joseph,
iii. 186.
Warton, Thomas,
on Chaucer as a disciple of Gower, i. 149;
on Chaucer as a student of Oxford, i. 169;
on the genuineness of the Plowman's tale, i. 472;
on the original of the Knight's tale, ii. 204;
on Valerius Maximus, ii. 276;
on Chaucer's knowledge of Livy, ii. 279;
on Benoît de Sainte-More, ii. 310;
on the Alexandreid, ii. 354;
on Lollius, ii. 406, 407;
an explorer, iii. 26;
on Chaucer as a sunny day in an English spring, iii. 27;
sees Milton's hand in Phillips's account of Chaucer, iii. 91;
modernizations of Chaucer, iii. 158, 184;
his criticism of Chaucer, iii. 244–253;
on Chaucer's anachronisms, iii. 375;
on the source of the House of Fame, iii. 397, 398;
on Chaucer as an imitator of Alain Chartier, iii. 406.
Warton, Rev. Thomas,
imitations of Chaucer, iii. 125, 126.
Webbe, William,
his Discourse of English Poetry cited, iii. 42.
Weisse, John Adam (M.D.),
his Origin, Progress, and Destiny of the English Language and Literature quoted, ii. 434, 435.
Welsted, Leonard,
on change in language, iii. 142, 143.
West, Gilbert,
his use of obsolete words, iii. 152.
Westhale, Joan de,
abduction of, i. 51.
Westminster,
Chaucer's tenement in, i. 93.
Weymouth, Dr. R. F.,
on distinction of sound between *here* and *there*, ii. 17, 18.
Wharton, Henry,
his commendation of Chaucer's learning, ii. 171;
his sketch of Chaucer's life, ii. 465.
Wharton, Richard,
his modernization of the Franklin's tale, iii. 205.
Whimsical Legacy, The, Grosvenor's,
iii. 192.
Wife of Bath's tale, The,
alteration of text of, i. 256–258;
textual errors illustrated from, i. 307;
illustrations from, of the tests of genuineness, ii. 49, 51, 115, 116, 127, 132, 137, 141, 142, 147, 149;
illustration from, of the inaccuracy of Chaucer's scholarship, ii. 186;
books and authors used or named in, ii. 219, 236, 237, 239, 251, 260, 269, 275, 289, 292, 318, 319, 352, 364, 365, 367 ff. 372, 379, 396, 400, 415, iii. 452;
Chaucer's sceptical tendency as shown in, ii. 496;
the attack upon celibacy contained in the prologue of, ii. 522–530;
imitation of prologue of, by Dunbar, iii. 20;
commonplaced by Milton, iii. 76;
Dryden's modernization of, iii. 162, 176, 178;
Pope's modernization of, iii. 181, 182, 185;

Chaucer's literary art as shown in, iii. 340, 353, 417;
prologue of, misapprehended, iii. 360, 361.
William of Newburgh,
ii. 316.
Winstanley, William,
his Lives of the English Poets cited, i. 159.
Wit, Chaucer's,
depreciation of, by the Rev. A. G. K. L'Estrange, iii. 290.
'Withouten doute,' 'withouten drede,' 'withouten more,' 'withouten mo,' 'withouten wordes more,' 'withouten wordes mo,'
use of the phrases, as tests of the genuineness of the Romance of the Rose, ii. 92, 544–546, iii. 452.
Wolsey, Cardinal,
supposed suppression of the Plowman's tale, i. 462, 467, 469.
Woman,
Chaucer's relations to, and attitude towards, i. 97, 98, 112–115, 211–221, ii. 7, 291 ff, 515, 522–530, iii. 340–344.
Women for their Doubleness, A Ballade in Praise of (No. 46),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 439;
attributed to Lydgate, i. 475;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Women Unconstant, A Ballade against (No. 45),
added to list of Chaucer's poems by Stow, i. 439;
the question of its genuineness, i. 475, 504;
classed in this work, i. 504 n.
Wood, Anthony à,
his Athenæ Oxonienses cited, i. 281, ii. 444, iii. 87, 98.
Woodstock,
Chaucer's supposed residence at, i. 103, 141, 175–177.
Woodstock, Thomas of, Duke of Gloucester,
i. 82, 83.
Worde, Wynken de,
his edition of Chaucer's works, i. 264, iii. 33.
Words, Chaucer's,
number of, not yet defined, i. 350;
revival of, in sixteenth century, iii. 58–65.
Words and phrases, Distinctive,
common to Chaucer's admitted works and Romance of the Rose, ii. 86–121, 539–551;
not common to the two, ii. 103, 104.
Wordsworth, William,
his dictum that every great original writer must create his own audience, iii. 9;
his modernizations of Chaucer, i. 489, iii. 208–210;
joins in the last of the modernizations, iii. 214–229;
his admiration for Chaucer, and for Chaucer's treatment of simple themes, iii. 259, 441.
Works attributed to Chaucer,
[illegible]tification of, with reference to genuineness, i. 503, 504.
Wretched Engendering of Mankind, The,
named in the Legend of Good Women, i. 412;
a translation from the *De Contemptu Mundi* of Pope Innocent III., i. 423, 426, 427.
Wright, Thomas,
his edition of Chaucer's works, i. 313-324, 328, ii. 3 n.;
his attacks on Tyrwhitt's text, i. 315–321;
indebtedness to, of R. Bell's edition, i. 325, 478;
his Political Poems and Songs cited, i. 443 n., 460 n.;

points out the original of the story of Constance in Chaucer and Gower, ii. 210;
on the original of the Nun's Priest's tale, ii. 215;
on the original of the Reeve's tale, i. 315, 319, ii. 216, iii. 413, 414;
on the language of Chaucer, ii. 450;
on Chaucer's want of originality, iii. 394.
Writings of Chaucer, The,
(See *Table of Contents, chap. iv.*)
Wyatt, Sir Thomas,
love-poetry of, i. 218;
Nott's edition of his poems, i. 331;
F. Thynne's mention of, i. 463;
on the Tale of Sir Thopas, iii. 244.
Wycliffe, John,
Chaucer's attitude towards, ii. 459–485;
effects of his teachings, ii. 492–494.
Wynne, William W. E., i. 340.

Yalden, Thomas,
mention of Chaucer, iii. 92.
*-ye* and *-y* test of genuineness, i. 371–375, 388–394, ii. 57, 58.
Young, Edward, i. 334.
Ypotis, Sir, Romance of,
Chaucer's knowledge of, ii. 201.

Zael,
*Liber Electionum*, ii. 415.
Zanzis, unknown author, ii. 411, 412.
Z. A. Z.,
his modernization of the Tale of Sir Thopas, iii. 217.
Zenobia,
Chaucer's error as to, ii. 185, 186.
the story of, ii. 231, 233, 235, iii. 12.
Zeuxis,
conjecture as to identity of Zanzis with, ii. 412.

THE END